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THE REFORMED PRINCIPLE OF AUTHORITY

**The Scripture Principle of the Reformation
Set forth in the Light of our Times**

BY

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In Reverent Memory of
PROFESSOR NICHOLAS M. STEFFENS, D.D., LL.D.
A Teacher of Large Scholarship and of Rare Powers
of Discrimination,
an Enthusiastic Expounder of the Reformed Faith,
and withal a Devout Christian.

THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED
by his Grateful Pupil.

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INTRODUCTION

We live in a time in which opinion in regard to Christianity and its grounds is unsettled. It is asked, What really is Christianity? Whence is it derived? How is it apprehended? When the appeal is made to reality, it is often so formulated as to put a premium upon doubt. An objective ground — the very best of all — is largely wanting. Instead of looking for this we are bidden by the prophets of the new age to trust the eternal issues of the soul upon what is quite subjective and variable as the winds and the waves of the sea.

It would be an immense relief to many people if they could get a clear view of the principles which dominate our construction of Scripture, its relation to us and our relation to it. We will not get anywhere unless we proceed from bed-rock principle. As we shall explain more particularly in our Third Chapter, every variety of view can be subsumed under three principles, each generic and exhaustive; there can be no more. All varieties and shades can be led back to one of these three. As soon therefore as we are satisfied with what we may believe to be the correct one, we shall at once have clear sailing. In the dispute, for instance, concerning the Virgin Birth, large numbers are shaken in their confession of it because the matter is so generally argued from the historico-critical standpoint, that is, from the rationalistic principle: this very easily casts doubt upon the doctrine. However, as soon as we maintain the authority of the Word of God in its entirety, the matter is made out in quick order. Every doctrine of the Word stands on insecure footing if it is determined from subjective

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considerations: it is apt to rob us even of our Christianity. What such people still believe will be held in spite of their principle. This is of course illogical and unsatisfactory, and has done much harm.

The course of the argument of this book is this: After some historical preliminaries in the first two chapters, the third treats of the principles of authority; and the truth and satisfactory character of the Reformed principle is shown. Thence we conclude to the Divine Origin and unique character of the Scriptures (IV). How unsatisfactory the rationalistic principle works out is shown in a concrete example (V). That Holy Scripture is literature of a class all by itself, and cannot be criticized with a view of arriving at its internal character on penalty of denying its authority (VI). Since however Scripture was written with the concurrent human agency, a theory of Inspiration must be held which best comports with the situation (VII). This wonder-work of the Holy Spirit is such a complex organism that it presents an immense range of material which needs to be gathered, analyzed and assimilated, whence the Church has found it necessary to construct its compendia thereof called the Creeds (VIII). These Creeds and Confessions being the carefully considered and oft tested fruit of the best thought of the ages have an enduring value (IX). Why the Sermon on the Mount cannot be the Creed nor the program of Christianity (X). What then is Christianity? (XI). Finally, the high character of the Reformed principle of authority as it constrains to a high view of Scripture also sets a high demand upon the man who preaches it, making him a Minister of the Divine Word (XII).

The issues are such — and in our day they have been sharply drawn — that some choice must be made. Hence

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all this controversy. Now controversy is undesirable, but sometimes it cannot be avoided. It must be remembered that controversies would never have obtained except for the entrance of the Old Serpent, when he instilled the seeds of doubt and rebellion into the happiness of peaceful Eden. Since that time Jehovah has ever had a controversy with man. "God is a God of Peace"; but when His authority is invaded, and when error and rebellion raise their horrid heads then "Jehovah is a man of war". Under similar circumstances all those who love His cause will be obliged, as necessity arises, to do valiant service for Him and quit themselves like men.

There obtains considerable misunderstanding and misapprehension as to the meaning of Christian love and forbearance, of meekness and the like. They refer to agreeable things in the Divine attributes which must be reflected in His children. But likewise as we read of righteousness, justice, truth, abhorrence of sin, etc., in the virtues of the Godhead, these too must have a place in the character of believers, who, however, must see to it that their sinful perversions do not mar and transform their glory. The Divine exhibition of love and forbearance have a temporary and relative office in as far as they operate in harmony with His wisdom in the course of His providence: they are not absolute in their application. Thus Jesus was in deed the Prince of Peace; but he said: "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). Jesus called the weary and heavy laden lovingly unto himself, but he also denounced the Scribes and Pharisees in unsparing terms. And while today we preach the Gospel of the love of God, there is also often occasion to handle desperate situations without gloves.

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Far too often is God represented in the preaching of our times as a God without character, a great Goody-goody, who cannot be provoked and will, after all, eventually admit every one to his heaven.

It should be plain therefore that pacifism in any form is contrary to common sense and to Scripture. In both civil and ecclesiastical relations there is large room for forbearance and meekness; but evil is a desperate thing: it will avail itself of its opportunities whenever it can do so, and will love nothing better than to see the Christian resting upon his arms. We have to be very careful about our application of the language of Matthew 5:38-42. This passage does not exhibit a rule of absolute conduct: it merely indicates a disposition of heart which is relative, and to be followed according to good judgment. Its application therefore is limited: error and sin cannot always be overcome with forbearance. Our Lord and His Apostles did not always follow this rule; and it will be notably set aside when the Prince of Peace shall come in flaming fire to execute judgment upon his enemies.

The reason of the present controversy is not that the orthodox have picked a quarrel with the Modernists, spoiling for a fight. On the contrary, it is Modernism which has invaded the domain of the orthodox. They themselves say that they bring the new; and they aim to supplant the old, the out-worn. They come with the superior article, and the orthodox are obscurantists, the left-overs, etc. And the general public which has not been trained to fully grasp the issues involved, defer to men of culture and science, all the more as they come with noisy insistence of their up-to-date-ness. If now the orthodox say nothing and show meekness and forbearance, the issue will never be in doubt. And what

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hurts the orthodox the most is the pretence to a specially high brand of ethics which the Modernist claims, and then to notice the devious way in which they urge their views. So much is done directly at variance with the most solemn vows and obligations of the Church, of disobedience against church deliverances, against common propriety and order! One becomes exceedingly nettled when all this is paraded under the name of Christian forbearance. I have repeatedly been struck with the vagueness of statement, the subterfuge, the ignoring of pointed fact and argument, the arrogant dogmatism of those sweet-tempered Modernists towards those who still hold to an "antique theology".

And how Unitarians agree with us in our estimate of the situation will appear from a proclamation of twenty-seven of their ministers headed by ex-President Eliot: "With all courtesy and consideration let us make it plain that religious teachers who play with words in the most solemn relations of life, who make their creeds mean what they were not originally intended to mean, or mentally reject a formula of belief while outwardly respecting it, cannot expect to retain the allegiance of men who are accustomed to straight thinking and square dealing."

Invaded as they are in their own rightful domain, and that in a manner whose honesty does not commend itself even to the world, we ask once more, are not the orthodox justified in repelling the invasion? Can they trust any sweet reasonableness in their opponents? Or is there sense and reason in the idea that all will come right of itself? Does that not smack of fatalism? It is our duty as reasonable beings to make use of our powers as the occasion arises, and do so with firmness and in the fear of God. To anticipate our second chapter, Dr. Kuyper

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quotes with great admiration the break between the great English statesmen, Burke and Fox, on the score of a great principle. Says Kuyper: "Burke did not hesitate at once and openly to break with Fox; and although the latter burst out in tears, and besought his friend not to sunder the ties which had bound them for thirty years, Burke remained immoveable, inexorable. Since principles were involved, he would not listen to accommodation. He said: 'I know the value of my line of conduct; I have indeed made a great sacrifice; I have done my duty though I have lost a friend.' In this resolute act and virile language there is something which captivates any man of character, for as soon as principles which conflict with your deepest convictions gain ground, controversy becomes a duty, peace becomes sinful, and you are obliged to denounce such pernicious principles, and brand them with the mark of infamy." As to the pity of it all, Burke also used these telling words: "Such is now the misfortune of our age, that everything is to be discussed, as if the truth of religion were to be always a subject rather of altercation than enjoyment."

Prof. Rutgers of Amsterdam has said: "Ecclesiastical controversy is unavoidable when a principle has found entrance into the church which is foreign to her and threatens her life. A vigorous resistance of her own life-principle cannot remain away."

Orthodoxy is not yet dead. Any son of the Reformation who is worth anything must speak out. We despise that characterless supineness which allows everything to drift along, while the enemy is having all his way. In fear of God, as we believe in the Reformed principle of authority, which alone will keep the Scripture in our possession with the light of its teachings, we must assert

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ourselves if we would be truly loyal to our God, to His Christ, to His Word. Doing so we stand in our own right and simply repel the *intruder*. And while we do so vigorously, we do so in love. When men talk very earnestly, it is only the superficial character which makes remarks about suspecting rancor. In the strenuousness of battle earnest men first think of their cause, and will attend to the amenities of life after the contest is over.

Strong issues forced to their logical conclusion may bring on even more unpleasant things than folks usually regard as such. A loyal church may have to resort to forcible measures to eject an intruder. People deprecate "heresy trials", largely due to skilful manipulation of public sentiment industriously fostered by the very class which would suffer from them. "But there are worse things than heresy trials, and one of them is a state of servile acquiescence in open disloyalty to Jesus Christ. Under the guise of progress and in liberty of expression it is an easy matter to give the name of "heresy hunter" to those who take a stand for the faith; but men of conviction dare not hesitate for a moment when they feel that the honor of Christ is involved; and they will not forget that it was Christ himself who said, 'Beware when all men shall speak well of you' " (C. E. Macartney).

An episode from the book of Judges is full of instruction and warning in our situation. Meroz was a town in northern Palestine near the scene of the military operations which resulted in the defeat of Jabin. Meroz had full cognizance of everything that was going on. The war concerned the freedom of the people of Jehovah, the honor of Jehovah Himself. What was said of its inhabitants?

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"Curse ye Meroz, said the Angel of Jehovah.
Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof:
Because they came not to the help of Jehovah,
To the help of Jehovah against the mighty"
(Judges 5:23).

Why all this? "Had the people of Meroz taken up arms against Jehovah? No. Had they gone over to the enemy and fought against the chosen people? No. What then had they done? *Nothing!* Their neutrality was their crime" (Newton). "To refuse aid to the sacred cause until it was certain of success, was in a man or community belonging to the covenanted nation an act of virtual apostasy; and Meroz was not merely politically disfranchised, it was religiously excommunicated" (Liddon).

The men of Meroz may have had their "reasons". They may have believed in pacifism; they may have had special excuses. But whatever these might be, they had opportunity to render particular and important service to the Lord's cause, and this they neglected! A curse? As harsh as that? Let us not cavil about the terms: it is enough to court the displeasure of the Lord. And who is it that pronounces the curse? Not Deborah. "Curse ye Meroz, *said the Angel of Jehovah!*" This is none other than the Covenant Angel, the Lord Jesus Christ in his pre-incarnate state.

What are our present circumstances? Today the Church is in danger of many a Jabin who threatens to knuckle under our liberties in the gospel. Worldliness and sinful habits largely prevail. Indifference and ignorance of the truth are twin evils. It is on this that the false prophets of our time thrive. They pooh-pooh the warnings of the prophets of the Lord. God's Word is being attacked with reasons so specious that the common people readily believe it. Religiously things are

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in a demoralized condition. The blood atonement is held up to ridicule. Salvation through the cross is not the real thing: it is character which after all avails with God. There is slight need of going to the heathen to preach the gospel: they have about as much themselves if they will only resolutely bestir themselves to live up to high ideals. If Christianity only becomes a social power its real purpose is attained. Such ideas have a great vogue today.

The Scripture principle of the Reformation puts quite a different face upon the situation, and this must be honestly faced and obeyed if we shall stand the severe scrutiny of our Lord. And let no minister of Lord think that it is enough merely to be "evangelical" whilst neglecting to take strong position in the impregnable rock of Scripture. What boots your gospel preaching when the Jabin of rationalism stalks around who eventually will cut from under our feet the very thing on the ground of which you can at all present the compelling claims of Christ upon the heart?

The late Dr. Jowett has well said: "But it is possible so to contend even for central things as to lose the sense of relation and proportion; and by the manner of our controversy we may lose the clear sight of the supreme values. The first necessity of all vital and tenacious hold upon the evangelical verities and of fruitful ministry in them is the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ." It is very true that we must in every circumstance of life seek to manifest the spirit of Christ, even when brethren must be resisted to the face. But it is also a sad thing that irenical natures are apt to do very little in the way of such positive activity as will in times of danger be necessary to clinch a hold upon eternal verities. Attitudes of definite hostility to the truth must

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be met by as definite an attitude from the other side and vigorously followed up. Love and loyalty can go hand in hand in the cause of the Master.

It is high time that we gain a clear view of the foundations of our faith; that we resolutely profess it and live up to our undoubted beliefs, which is very necessary today on account of the positive and determined activities of error to spread its cause.

* *
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In order to avoid the slightest possibility of giving offense, it may not be amiss to remind the reader that the term 'Reformed' is intended to be used in that wide latitude of meaning which makes it very nearly synonymous with the term 'Protestant'. In referring to the current controversy in the Presbyterian Church and in applying his comment, the author may sometimes have had the distinctive character of this class of Churches in mind; but this should not be interpreted as meaning that Reformed or Presbyterian Churches with that particular name should have a monopoly of the great principle which underlies the use of Scripture as our sole principle of authority. Indeed, at least as they were originally constituted, Baptist Churches, Methodist, Congregational and ever so many more, stand on the same principle.

Ontario, New York, March 28, 1924.

CHAPTER I

A PAGE OR TWO FROM CHURCH HISTORY

It fills one with amazement that so many Ministers of the Divine Word, sons of the Reformation, should so quickly have been carried away from their moorings, to venture upon a sea which had already offered its dangers and counts an untold number of shipwrecks. They have been deceived by fair appearances. Men of learning (and piety) have had dangled before their eyes a gold-brick which has been offered as being 24 carets fine. In an evil hour the Divine truth has been exchanged for something which appeared to be a superior article, and which, alas, is being retained with firmest grip, although strong warnings against deception have gone forth. As the honor of God and His Word and eternal issues are so closely connected with the matter, it is exceedingly necessary that the situation be examined with scrupulous care and earnest purpose.

Just now an endless number of books are issuing from the press in praise of the so-called "new Bible". It was never understood before, they say. Its beauty is now seen in the advanced and enlightened interpretation of this new age of progress. This Bible will be read as never before, and religious ignorance will be speedily dissipated, we are told. However, we stand before a terrible alternative. If the promise of the Modernist is correct, we surely cannot have too much of such literature. But if the Reformed view of the Bible is correct, the largest part of this modern learning is but cultured

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rubbish, and subversive of the real interests of the soul and the Kingdom of God.

In the erstwhile Republic of the United Netherlands the province of Holland (now divided into North and South Holland) was the fairest and the richest. With Zeeland she stood in the front ranks in the mighty contest with Spain for civic and religious liberty. Naarden and Haarlem had offered strong resistance to the disciplined troops of the mightiest military power of Europe, but these cities were obliged, after a heroic resistance, to surrender to the foe, trusting its promise of leniency, only to be butchered in a horrible manner forthwith. Leyden having learned the double lesson determined to hold out to the last, and would rather capitulate to King Famine than to the Most Christian King of Europe. A kind Providence saved the devoted city, and as a reward for her gallantry, rather than be excused from the payment of taxes or the like, she chose the offer of the government to become the seat of a University. And Leyden did become a seat of learning famous for a long time in all Europe. Founded as it was under the influence of the principles of the Reformation, the instruction in all of its faculties was given in accordance with such principles. The famous Boerhaave, great as a man and as a Christian, first took a course of theology in this University, then of medicine; and, having practiced his profession with such success that all the world knew about him, he also became a professor in the medical faculty of his alma mater. In theology, too, many men of eminence, commencing with Franciscus Junius, here taught. In an evil hour Arminius appeared, the authorities being hardly aware of the danger which was lurking in his appointment. But in course of time, even more evil influences have

managed to secure a foothold; and from this strongest citadel of orthodoxy, as it was founded, has gone forth streams of influence destructive of true Christianity. Rationalism and Liberalism in various forms and shades have there made their appearance. Here taught in these later times Prof. Kuenen, of Wellhausen-and-Kuenen fame, leaders in modern Higher Criticism. Shortly after the middle of the nineteenth century a school appeared which took as its specific name that of "Modernism", a somewhat different variety of view of which so much is being said in our day. The type in The Netherlands is more pronounced in its negations, whilst that in America, due to the strong evangelical current which has characterized our religious thought, is minded to hold to that type of belief, though admitting wide latitude of interpretation.

But this is the main point we wish to bring out, namely, that North Holland, and Leyden, at first so highly favored, the stronghold of orthodoxy and a moral and spiritual power in the land, on their relapse into these degrees of Liberalism, have lost their crown of glory and have contributed very little to the real spiritual upbuilding of The Netherlands. Their theology also colored their politics, so that the dominant party for a long term of years, the party of comparative unbelief, and calling itself by that very name, the 'Liberal' party, has not contributed to the moral strength of the land. When in the fall of 1918 an attempt was made at revolution and to hoist the red-flag, and for some days the issue hung in the balance, the Liberal party was not the power to stem the tide. The situation was saved by the firmness of the parties of the Right, the Anti-revolutionary (orthodox-Reformed) and the Catholic parties. Anti-revolutionary troops from Friesland and

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Roman Catholic troops from Limburg saved the day in The Hague. Dr. Kuyper, at that time in retirement, an old man of 81 and an invalid, had been advised by friends to flee in the night for which arrangements had been made. But he replied: "I will not forsake my post: I am in God's hand!" This great leader of his party, and, under God, the means to restore a vigorous Reformed theology with its spiritual power once more to The Netherlands, knew not what fear was, and stood like the Reformed of old, firm as a rock, and with a heart as tender and as appreciative as the humblest of God's children. On the evening of the day on which the issue reached a decision these Anti-revolutionary troops from Friesland proceeded to the residence of the ex-Prime Minister singing patriotic songs as they marched along and ranged themselves in front of his house. In the cold November evening he appeared before them, and refusing to cover his head, he would honor these faithful troops who had learned from him their devotion to true liberty, and from him had stood for the authority of the Divine ordinances. In his address he told them, with profound emotion, how good it was to see them, and to hear their patriotic songs. He continued: "What an unlooked for consolation God has vouchsafed me in the evening of my life because of this occasion. The principles for which I have contended all my life, are also embraced by you. But it is one thing to confess a belief, and it is quite another matter to be ready to give one's life for it, if God should so please. And behold, that you have done, men! It is this for which I thank my God from the bottom of my heart, as I also thank you for your great courtesy to me in coming here. When matters came to a crisis, when our country was in danger, when the throne of our beloved Queen became insecure — it

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was then that you did not hesitate a moment, but you have come up to your duty as one man, ready to give your all in a holy enthusiasm for the cause to which you have pledged your hearts. My time is wellnigh spent: in your hand lies the future. But this I have felt, and I thank you for it, that your coming to this city and your singing in front of my residence are an indication to me from my God that when He shall have called me home, the principles, which are above everything precious to me, will remain operative in the coming generation as they have produced their good offices in your case."

He then asked the soldiers to sing his favorite verse from the Psalms (the 89th Psalm and the seventh verse, Dutch metrical Version), of which the following is a translation as nearly as possible in meter and thought:

"How blest the people are that know the joyful sound!
They walk, o Lord, by light which with Thee doth abound.
They're all the day rejoicing in Thy Name most blessèd:
Thy goodness cheers; Thy might supports them when distressèd.
Thy faithfulness shall ne'er permit their trust to waver,
But in Thy righteousness they're raised on high to favor."

The stately choral music to which the words are sung resounded strong and solemn in the stillness of the night. Less than two years afterwards the same words and music were sung in the cemetery as they laid the body of the great man in his tomb.

This gives occasion to speak somewhat in detail concerning this man of God whose life and labors have meant far more to Reformed theology than men are aware of. He should be known in America far more than he is. The comparative obscurity is due, no doubt, to residence in a small country and to a language which, unlike the German, has not been acquired by American

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scholars. However small, though, Holland is, it has furnished some great names such as Erasmus, Grotius, Voetius, Boerhaave, Van Oosterzee, not to mention painters and poets, scientists and statesmen. And how often it has been pointed out that Pilgrim and Puritan and Knickerbocker have learned and brought from thence the ideas which have laid the foundations of our free institutions and made America great. And in the Revolutionary War Holland considerably aided the infant Republic incurring the wrath of Great Britain.

Abraham Kuyper was born on Oct. 29, 1837, at Maassluis, and died in The Hague on Nov. 8, 1920. He studied in the strongly liberal University of Leyden under Professors Scholten, Kuenen and others. He gained his doctorate, and a gold medal, on his dissertation on John à Lasco, which was quite a feat on account of his discovery of documents which were supposed to be inaccessible. When he left the University to take charge of the church at Beesd, he went there with advanced liberal ideas. In this field he at once came in contact with plain people and of decidedly orthodox persuasion. He wrote of them: "They did not know of trimming or temporizing, and soon the painful choice began to force itself upon me of assuming a position of sharp antagonism, or of availing myself, as they expressed it, of the 'fulness of sovereign grace', without leaving me the least room of escape from the dilemma. As a matter of fact, I did not assume the attitude of opposition, and even now I thank my God for that choice. Their tenacious persistence has become a blessing to my heart, the rising of the morning-star in my life. I did not come to them with some sense of the reality of spiritual things, but I had not yet found the Word of reconciliation. It is this that they brought to me. Indeed,

they brought it to me in defective language, but nevertheless in that absolute form in which alone my soul could find rest — in the worship and adoration of a God who works *all* things, *both* to will and to work his good pleasure."

One of the members of this church of Beesd was Miss Pietronella Baltus. Familiarly she is called Pietje (pronounced Peet-yeh) Baltus. When Dr. Kuyper, in 1833, became pastor of this church, he soon met this woman, then thirty-three years of age, in his regular pastoral visitation (called 'huisbezoek') — visits always involving inquiry into one's spiritual welfare. On her very first 'huisbezoek' Miss Baltus raised objection against the character of her pastor's preaching, and she proceeded to admonish him on the necessity of *his* conversion, of taking refuge in the blood of the atonement, appropriated through justifying faith. Of course, they had a great conversation. On leaving, Dr. Kuyper was about to shake hands with her, but she refused as a protest to his spiritual character. However, Dr. Kuyper did not cease begging her to do so, and she acceded with the understanding that she would shake hands on the strength of common civility. It was a matter of great significance that she dared thus to treat her pastor, as she was but the daughter of a day-laborer, and in Holland the minister was held in uncommon high honor. Dr. Kuyper did not wait long ere he returned, once and again, talking with her on the things of the Spirit, and he came more and more under the influence of the Reformed persuasion of a strict dependence upon God. Characteristic of this woman was her positiveness. She insisted on a confession of faith of full compass such as our martyrs died for. These conversations had this great effect upon Dr. Kuyper that through them he grasped,

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as he says, "the power of the *absolute*, and broke with all hybridism and halfness".*

Another matter that contributed to the changed life and views of Dr. Kuyper, was his reading of Miss Yonge's "The Heir of Redclyffe". He wrote of it to a bosom friend: "My memory speaks of an English novel which for me ranks next to my Bible, I do not say in *value* but in its meaning for my life. That masterpiece has been the means of breaking my self-sufficient rebellious heart." The scene which touched Kuyper's heart is that at the death-bed of Guy. The haughty Philip had been humbled and his language of self-judgment was felt by Kuyper to be applicable to himself. When Philip refused to enter the room to take part in the Holy Communion with his dying cousin, because Philip felt himself too unworthy for utterance, this text spoken to him, encouraged him: "A broken and a contrite heart, o God, thou wilt not despise". "This was a balm which quieted his grief, and Philip arose and went in, and knelt besides Amabel at Guy's deathbed." "Then," so Kuyper continues, "(I was alone), I felt the scene overpowering me. I read that Philip wept, and, dear brother, [the account is written to a friend] my own eyes filled with tears. I read that Philip kneeled; and before I knew it, I myself lay before my chair and

* It may interest the reader to know that Miss Baltus followed the career of Dr. Kuyper with great interest, acknowledging him as a child of God and reading his papers with delight, but not always agreeing with his politics. She died in 1914 at the age of 84 years. The editor of one of the foremost dailies, **De Standaard**, in an editorial commenting on her death, was not ashamed to proclaim that it was this woman in particular who had been the means in God's hand to bring him to the faith. This editor was none other than Dr. A. Kuyper, foremost theologian in The Netherlands, the leader of his party, and erstwhile for four years Prime Minister of the Kingdom.

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had folded my hands. Oh, what I have passed through in those moments in my soul, I have not fully learned to understand till later; however, from that hour I have abhorred what I admired before, I have sought what I previously had dared look down upon."

Dr. Kuyper left Beesd after a ministry of four years, a changed man. In his farewell sermon he spoke in part such noble words as these: "The spirit of this age robbed me for a time of the faith of my childhood..... I was carried away with a view which in its last analysis is hostile to the gospel of grace just as long as religion was to me a matter of secondary import..... I doted on this just as long as my heart was unaware of its need of the gospel, just as long as the pure doctrine of the fathers was known to me only in the distorted representation of its opposers or in the slanderous extremes of narrow-minded devotees. But when hunger arose with its cry for bread, when life became serious, and certain experiences, which are too delicate and holy to mention here, dissipated the levity of worldly views, oh, sirs, I then felt in all its crying depths how poor, how empty, how despoiled and comfortless this pretended new religion of our age had left me..... My baptism of doubt gave me the firsthand knowledge of a personal experience, and developed in my soul a strong aversion to a view which appeared to me thoroughly false in its principles, and I have accepted the foolishness of the Cross as the highest and only wisdom..... These four years in your midst have been rich in my development, and all unconsciously, no doubt, many a one in your midst has contributed to bring this about."

His spiritual experiences led Kuyper to a painstaking study of the great writers of the Reformation. He had formerly indeed looked into them for historical purposes,

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but his convictions then were squarely against them, and he did not catch their spirit. "In the estimation of the learned in the University of Leyden the purchase of books of the Reformed theologians would have been considered a sheer waste of money. But now Kuyper saw his deficiency and his need cried out for such works as would indeed open the Scriptures. The works of Martensen, Nitzsch, Lange, Vinet, etc., were useful, but they did not satisfy the deeper need. But when he came down to Calvin, he struck bed-rock foundations, which, making an end to doubt, furnished that upon which the theological building could be reared in strict compliance with the requirements of the situation, and with the surprising result that the strictest ethics were of one piece with it. And so it appeared that these unsophisticated farmers of Gelderland had been telling him the very same things that Kuyper was reading in the scholarly Latin of Calvin. The great Reformer had taught in such a manner, that centuries after his death, these plain farmers, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, had comprehended him." (Winckel).

Kuyper always maintained that the great writers of the period of the Reformation (and soon after) present the truth of Scripture in so *clear* a form *because they taught in obedience to their principle*, and so have elicited the astonishment of the careful investigator. Much of what has been given later, in a more enlightened form, as is claimed, even among the best, shows traces of degeneration. The object therefore of Kuyper was to pay strict attention to the principles which had given such surprising insight to the earliest theologians and which should be consistently carried out to the present day. He corrected much that was off-color in the Reformed theology in the Netherlands, and no one need

A PAGE OR TWO FROM CHURCH HISTORY

take it ill when we dare assert that we in America still have to learn in the same direction, particularly in a time when we are waging the war of our existence as Reformed people against the onslaughts of Modernism.

Dr. Kuyper became pastor in the churches of Utrecht and Amsterdam for only a few years when his numerous other duties constrained him to devote all his time and talents to these.

In Dec. 1877 he issued the first number of *De Heraut*, a religious weekly, in which he was free to develop and advocate his views. This weekly was edited with great skill. Half of it contained matter from his own pen. Leading articles on doctrinal subjects in serial form became the solid instruction of thousands of laymen in Reformed theology. His spirited short editorials are a marvel of apposite and incisive remark on current events ever adding strength to his cause.

Since it had for a long time been difficult to procure a sufficient supply of orthodox ministers because of the dominant Liberalism of the Universities, Dr. Kuyper conceived the idea of founding a new University. This could be a matter of faith only, since state funds could not be forthcoming; besides, as was expected, strong opposition would develop in admitting such graduates to churches in the Establishment. Which indeed proved to become the case. On Oct. 20, 1880, the Free University of Amsterdam was opened with five professors. Dr. Kuyper being one of them, and giving instruction in Dogmatics and Hebrew. The scholastic requirements were of the strictest. Numerous young men have taken the course for the degree of Doctor of Divinity according to all the severe methods of the other Universities. They have given dissertations which testify of genuine learning. Dr Kuyper insisted that Reformed Theology

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should be taught with strictest regard to all scientific requirements, as, being the truth of God, it could stand this far better than any other. He was not an obscurantist, nor a narrow-mined bigot without perception of the realities of life, but he believed in the Divine Revelation, he saw its glory and its beauty, he understood the organic unity of the whole. He felt that man can well afford to submit to the wisdom of God and that for man to substitute his petty private views and insights is but darkening counsel and taking issue with the Most High.

It is a great pity that Dr. Kuyper has not left us a Dogmatic Theology of his own. All we have are the five large volumes called his "Dictaten Dogmatiek", his lectures as taken down by his students. In the introduction to this work, written by himself, he praises his students for what they made of it, though he must admit that some parts were inferior to others.

Be that as it may, there is another work of his hand which makes up the deficiency just mentioned. It is his "Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology", which appeared in three volumes. A part of it is obtainable in an English translation, published by Scribner's. The author says in the Foreword: "Having myself been educated under Scholten and Kuenen, in an entirely different sphere of theological ideas, and later not less charmed with the *Vermittelungstheologie*, I found no rest for my heart, neither for my thinking, than when my eye was opened for the depth, the earnestness and the beauty of the Reformed Confession, which has come to us from those days so rich spiritually, when Calvinism was still a *world-power* not only in the theological, but also in the social and political domains. This made me see the strong necessity of waking up this Reformed theology

which as such has, since the middle of the eighteenth century, entered upon the sleep of the slothful, and of bringing it into *rapport* with human consciousness as this has developed itself in our day." In another place he says his object is to "give solid ground under foot." Though flowing forth from the old Reformed principle of authority, there is nothing "static" about this work; it is thoroughly up-to-date; it presents the unchangeable things of being and thought in the realm of religion with firmer grasp, because seen in the light of continued Bible study and called forth through later developments of error. In our opinion this work deserves to be read and re-read; to be pondered and assimilated; since it gives to the heart, to the Christian mind, as it satisfies its deepest needs, a sense of unshakeable security in setting forth the nature of the Testimony of the Holy Spirit to the truth of Divine realities. Considerable quotation from this work will be made in chapters which are to follow.

In our next chapter we give, in somewhat abridged form, a translation of a famous lecture delivered by Dr. Kuyper in 1871. We do so because of its numerous correspondencies with present conditions in America.

In conclusion, we can only note that shortly after the death of Kuyper, another able Reformed theologian, his successor to the chair of Dogmatics in the Free University of Amsterdam, passed away, the Rev. Dr. Herman Bavinck. He is known in America for his Stone Lectures, "The Philosophy of Revelation". He left a complete Dogmatics in four volumes, which stands squarely upon the Scripture principle of the Reformation. It is a work of very wide research, judicious formulation and severely scientific in the presentation of the material. Dr. Bavinck was also a great student of

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philosophy, so that it is a great pity that he did not live long enough to furnish a Philosophy on lines indicated by the Word of God, the Highest Wisdom, and so deliver us in a measure from the ceaseless flux and reflux of human speculations.

CHAPTER II

MODERNISM, A FATA MORGANA IN THE CHRISTIAN WORLD

BY ABRAHAM KUYPER, D.D.

A tremendous spiritual conflict is raging. Everything about us is in a ferment. Firm foundations are being battered and principles undermined.

The peaceable are inclined to leave it all alone and allow the fires to die down of themselves. But for my part, I have the strongest conviction that we may not resort to such a course, and I desire to give my reasons for this in the light of an occurrence in the English House of Commons dating from 1791. The French Revolution had but recently broken out. Edmund Burke had attacked it in an able pamphlet entitled: "Reflexions on the French Revolution." This pamphlet quickly attained an immense circulation. In it Burke set forth the infernal origin of this movement, and, seizing the monster by the horns, flung it down upon the rock of the Divine Word and ordinances. Now, on the sixth day of May of that year, Charles J. Fox, a bosom friend of Burke, rose from the ministerial benches in the House of Commons and proceeded emphatically to plead in favor of said Revolution. In reply Burke did not hesitate at once and openly to break with Fox; and although the latter burst out in tears, and besought his friend not to sunder the ties which had bound them for thirty years, Burke remained immovable, inexorable. Since principles were involved, he would not listen to accommodation. He said: "I know the value of my line of conduct; I have indeed made a

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great sacrifice; I have done my duty, though I have lost a friend. There is something in the detested French Revolution that envenoms everything it touches.”*

In this resolute act and virile language there is something which captivates any man of character, for as soon as principles which conflict with your deepest convictions gain ground, controversy becomes a duty, peace becomes sinful, and you are obliged to denounce such pernicious principles, and brand them with the mark of infamy.

Now I judge that in the same sense controversy may no longer be avoided with Modernism, in which the warfare against Christianity has now created its best correlated system. This is, to be sure, a pity, because religion loses something of its fragrance if we must debate it before we may enjoy it; but, in spite of this aversion, it behooves us to confess with Burke, to quote him once more: “Such is now the misfortune of our age, that everything is to be discussed, as if the truth of religion were to be always a subject rather of altercation than enjoyment.” You cannot run away from your times, you must take them as they are, and as a matter of fact our age demands either of two: to behold the verities of your faith crumbling away, or to engage in its defense; and before such a choice a man of convictions does not know what even hesitation is.

Because of the serious character of this controversy it may never seek strength in disparagement, nor may it degenerate into abuse. Whoever fails to set due value

* “Coleridge, asking whence Burke gained his superiority of foresight so strikingly verified by the course of events, says: ‘Burke possessed, and had sedulously sharpened that eye which sees all things, actions and events in relation to the laws that determine their existence and circumscribe their possibility. We referred habitually to principles. He was a scientific statesman, and therefore a seer. For every principle contains in itself the germs of prophecy’.”—Biogr. Dict.; cited by G. H. H.

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upon his opponent does not so much fight *him* as the scarecrow of his own imagination. Rather shall an earnest appraisal of Modernism afford me the basis for its refutation. And I did not know in what manner the more effectively to convey to you both what I value in Modernism as well as for what reason I oppose it, than to set it forth as a Fata Morgana in the Christian World.

This "Fata Morgana" is a mirage observed on the Sicilian coast poetically attributed to the fairy (fata) Morgana of Arthurian romance. This Fata Morgana has three characteristics; first, it presents to the wondering eye a beautiful view of palaces, landscapes and grazing cattle; secondly, this Morgana arises from a fixed law of refraction under certain atmospheric conditions, not creating anything, but reflecting in multiple and exaggerated forms what actually exists on Reggio's shores; finally, it lacks all reality. Using this as an illustration, I propose to point out to you that Modernism is first of all, charmingly beautiful; secondly, that it appears according to fixed laws; and finally, that it lacks the reality of the truth.

I

First of all, then, allow me to show why Modernism is so charmingly beautiful.

When, about the middle of the nineteenth century, Modernism under that specific name first appeared in the Netherlands, the striking phenomenon presented itself that strictly orthodox people, who for some time had been absenting themselves from attendance at divine services because of the perfunctory and insipid type of preaching then prevalent, suddenly took notice of the new type of preaching which young men with a fine enthusiasm and

with the use of the ancient terminology, were offering to the people. They listened for a time with glad surprise. However, doubts and fears soon began to trouble their fond hopes. Eventually they correctly gauged the situation, and asserted that they had been deceived with fair words and plausible presentations.

Aside from this historical reference, the circumstance that Modernism appeals to the finer sensibilities is evident from the fact that the élite of society, the men of thought, the men of earnest, serious impulses were captivated by it. And what did these people think of those who still clung to the old, even though so many of these latter were men of intelligence? They simply could not understand them; they labelled them as impossibles, behind the times. In Modernist circles of course our view of Christianity is considered to be clumsy caricature not answering to the needs of the heart nor fitting in with the times. But we must not forget that the thinking world has not examined orthodoxy in its own domain, but is acquainted only with the form in which off-hand public opinion exhibits it. And what does that make of positive Christianity? It is the difference between fungus and the stately oak. Public opinion regards what is immediately tangible; it sees in Christianity a series of singular acts and another series of singular moral demands, but it sees nothing of the marvelous organism which, hidden beneath the surface of things, binds these facts and sanctions together. Of course, the problems of life do not find their chief end in such a conception of things. The heart is too deep, the riddles of life too amazing as to be disposed of so easily. The thoughtful have perceived this. And so, when Modernism came, which once more put the glory of the ideal in view, which analyzed the human heart, which again inquired

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after causes, principles and relations, — all this appealed to the inquiring mind and wherever orthodoxy had lost its power.

For, after all, Christianity is a matter which concerns the realities of life: it fits the human heart and is calculated to fill the depths of that heart with its holy content. In its very essence Christianity is truly human. But it is such a great mistake to cut off its roots with which it must attach itself to the heart and heighten our consciousness of the supreme value of Christianity. What a tremendous mistake to prefer this, as, having forgotten the solid foundation of reality, one is entranced by the visions which merely *appear* to give what the heart calls for whilst indulging the easy fancies of its self-centered inclination.

II

A first view of Modernism offering a charm comparable to the Morgana, we shall next show how both of them arise in obedience to a common law of necessity.

As the Morgana is a false appearance in the natural world, so heresy is a false aspect of the truth.

Let no one take offense at this word. This should not be done because the term affords an indispensable concept in the Christian body of truth. Furthermore, Scripture furnishes us the example for the use of the term. But Rome has brought it into bad odor, particularly because Aquinas said that the heretic "should not only be cut off from the Church, but also from this life through death." Hence Rome, which thirsts after the blood of heretics, has been the real cause of this useful term's remaining so long in disrepute. But Schleiermacher, whom Modernists have reason to esteem, has again brought the term

into honor, and, having washed it of its blood-stains, no one should find fault with its use for expressing certain relations to truth.

As a matter of fact heresies always existed, and they *must* obtain because they arise in the Christian world according to a fixed law, just as the Morgana in the air. Specific conditions in the Christian world prepare the way for heresy. When, after an age of spiritual darkness, the light of knowledge arises but half-way in the air, Christianity as an object of contemplation falls under the partial illumination of this light, and if the required conditions are present in this spiritual atmosphere, heresy *must* show itself—it cannot remain away. As the Morgana is nothing else than the refraction of the light in nature, so heresy is but the necessary refraction of the light of Christianity in the spiritual atmosphere of an age.

For what is heresy? It becomes such when it opposes the confession of the Church in its own domain, as a result of which it seeks to bind the conscience to its own recognition, and itself presses for the mastery in the bosom of the Church.

The root of every heretical phenomenon is found in the human heart, and therefore there is no heresy but what it ever has been, and always will remain. However, in each age of renewed spiritual inquiry some heresy or other finds its congenial soil in the ideas prevalent in such an age, and is fed by them. Hence, such error acquires a dominating position; such error is to be explained from the refraction of Christianity in the spirit of that age. The fourth, the ninth, and the sixteenth centuries were the great crises in the life of Europe, and it can be affirmed that the centuries preceding these were centuries of spiritual sterility. The fourth witnessed the controversy over the Trinity and Free Will; the ninth

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turned on the questions of Filioque and the Sacrament; and in and through the Reformation the heresies of Socinus, and shortly after, that of Arminius began their course.

The tendency of heresy is to rob Christianity of its absolute character and to remove the fact of the reconciliation of the sinner more and more out of the deep springs of life towards the circumference of thought, disposition and will. This is also true of the Modernism of to-day. In some form or other Rationalism has always existed, but it has never acquired such a vogue as it has to-day, and it has never appeared with such unctious pretension.

These nineteenth and twentieth centuries constitute an age of peculiar enlightenment, and occupy in history a place of such honor that we have arrived at a very critical point in the life of the nations. It must follow therefore from the laws of history that a great heresy could not remain away. The sun of our age has not yet entered the fulness of the truth. Modernism is its heretical refraction peculiar to this day. Of course, Modernism borrows its ideas from Christianity, but it also shows a paganistic shade in that it builds up its system from out of man.

And now the last question: What is there in our spiritual atmosphere which causes this phenomenon to appear to-day? Why must heresy at this very time be this presumptuous Modernism?

The chief characteristic of our time is its realism. It has learned not to enthuse over empty ideals; before all things it wants to see, and to feel, and I would add, to fully enjoy. Four circumstances have driven this age into this realistic track: the bankruptcy of philosophy, the impotence of the French Revolution, the great

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advances in Nature-study, and the superficiality of religion.

1. Our age has judged that all speculative philosophy is bankrupt. It has stared itself blind at the hieroglyphics of the oracular language of Kant; it has bathed itself in Jacobi's sensuousness; for a while it has been enthused with Fichte's idealism of the Ego and Non-Ego; it was thought for a time that firmer ground was afforded in Schelling's gnosticism; and at last it has gasped in astonishment at the giddy mental gymnastics of Hegel. But, cured of the idea that the starting-point lay in these directions, it drew itself back into the concrete, and began to praise crude matter, and the ugliest animal as more beautiful than the most brilliant tissue of thought, of which the light frail cobweb would disappear before the slightest zephyr.

2. The French Revolution rightly felt that reformation was most necessary in the spiritual articulations of social and civil life. New life had awakened which required a new form. However, when it was thought that destruction of everything in existence was sufficient, and that new forms would arise as by magic, grievous disappointment ensued. As the dead past was cast off, and that which had so recently been conjured up disappeared in thin air, a taste for the idealism of a nobler national existence and for the demands of righteousness as the high calling of the nation, died away, and all studies of state resolved themselves in the realistic questions of capital and labor, of supply and demand.

3. Nature-studies have reached an unprecedented height. But whoever thinks that in consequence thereof our domination over nature is increased, is in error. Quite the contrary. The most important investigations, the greatest inventions in the domains of light and air

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have not made us lord over nature, but the contrary. All speak concerning her, for her is all our love, and for her we spend our strength. She charms us and dallies with our hearts and senses as a mistress. She permitted us to unloose her powers, but only in order by these very powers to rule in our life! And now, she is the visible, she is the ponderable, and thus she helps to further our perception of the real.

4. * [No less an authority than ex-President Hadley, of Yale University, stated as recently as October, 1923, that the "really distinctive faults which can be charged against the American people" is that which "results from a combination of two sets of faults; faults of superficial thinking or judgment, on the one hand, and faults of self-advertising and boastfulness on the other" (Current History, Oct. 1923, p. 7). Our great republic was founded by Puritan, Knickerbocker and Huguenot, men of sterling worth and solid convictions, who laid the foundations of our liberties sound and secure. However, in course of time we have been so completely taken up with our achievements, and have been so engrossed with our great affairs, and so spoiled by our prosperity, that on the one hand a sense of supreme satisfaction has hindered exertion to the neglect of the slower processes of high and deep thinking, and on the other hand, has weakened our ability for the perception of the strenuous. Smartness and quickness have slurred over thoroughness. There is a general complaint of ignorance of the great things of religion; there is small disposition to listen to

* Owing to a quite diverse situation in The Netherlands at the time when this lecture was delivered, and which does not obtain in America, we have been obliged to substitute matter of our own (in this one bracketed paragraph only), in order intelligently to carry through the sustained simile of the eminent Lecturer.—G. H. H.

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the strong meat of Scripture: everything must be pre-digested, everything must be served spicily, and be quick about it. Hence there is no taste for looking into the marvelous organism of Scripture; what lies on the surface is enough; snap judgment based on poor data is the rage, and there you have a most ideal soil for Modernism to thrive in. Democracy as self-expression of the people has engendered a self-sufficiency which has not failed to infect even the theologian, so much so that the appeal to reason and to the "natural man" has found ready response.]

Thus four factors conspired to impress a very realistic stamp upon our age. Its power must therefore be sought in its realism; however, its weakness lies in the same direction. Realism can and does easily beget materialism, and the right is apt to be accorded to the strong. The Modernists of America are impatient with anything that savors of cant, formalism, dead issues, etc. But, while it forgets to sift the false from the true, it imagines itself to be true to reality by putting the authority for things religious well within the reach of man. Democracy has reached a point where it summons everything to the court of its own competency. Thus the light of the Sun of Righteousness cannot be seen in its own independent glory, but is refracted by this earth-born atmosphere of a democratic self-sufficiency.

In designing to grasp the truth, instead of being diverted by an unreal traditionalism and formalism, Modernism means well; and it actually attempts to effect reconciliation between the things which are above and the things of this life. It seeks its strength in compromise. Above indeed are the things invisible: thither all must tend. And our age would follow; with the proviso, however, that it need not for a moment lift its foot from this

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visible earth which, unholy as it is, nevertheless must remain the scene of holy living. Modernism concedes that we should not be too much taken up with heaven, but must first of all live for this world. It concedes that the study of nature must be conductress for the study of the Kingdom of the Spirit. It concedes, that in the controversy between this world and the next, the former should never give way; hence, there can be no miracle. And finally, it concedes that, if there be any knowledge of God, it must be explained from man as he is. And if Christianity is to avail, it must lay aside its absolute character and claim of being the only religion.

Now, Modernism claims to be Protestant. But the very spirit of its organization is that of Rationalism, which as a generic principle of authority has existed from the beginning and against which as well as against the principle of the Roman Catholic the Reformation waged war. Modernism chooses as its point of departure human authority in matters of faith against which very thing Protestantism entered its mighty protest. Actually the antipode instead of being the fruit of the Reformation, Modernism has no right to deck itself with the honors of the Reformation. It never had knowledge of the contrition of heart which compelled Luther to cry out unto his God. It does not know what it means to be justified by faith apart from works of the law. The Reformation sought salvation for the burdened heart: Modernism only seeks the solution of an ingenious problem. Hence, as a matter of fact, it knows of only one reality: that of things visible, and it overlooks that of such a different nature, the much higher, the more substantial realities of the "kingdom which cannot be moved". Modernism speaks as though we are still dwelling in Eden; it speaks of a *natural* bond which still

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unites the visible with the invisible; and it does not understand that, if we did live in Eden, salvation would have been a term devoid of meaning, and Christianity a superfluity.

You will remember the illusion of the alchemists of the Middle Ages, who dreamed of transmuting the base metals into gold. They did not then know of the advances of modern chemistry which ascertained the fixed boundary lines between the different elements. The Modernist labors under a similar delusion. He too is ignoring the distinctions which the Creator has Himself established and which cannot be violated except at man's peril. The Modernist attempts by means of alloy and fusion to transform the base character of the unholy into the nobility of holiness. The glitter of his compound deceives him in the fancy that he is in possession of a superior article.

III

And in the third place, Modernism is devoid of reality.

As a specific school of new thought Modernism arose with us (in The Netherlands) about 1855. Concerning its history in the fifteen years till now (1870) the following may be noted: It began to erect a theological building of ambitious proportions, but already parts have needed replacement, and reconstruction has been going on. The eminent Professors Scholten and Opzoomer have become antiquated and have lost their lead. Men of enthusiasm for the new movement have lost courage, and some have even left the ministry. And what success did they have? In designing to counteract materialism they were sure they would win the sensual, the self-willed and the giddy for earnest living. As for the really serious-minded amongst them it has become evident that they brought

this seriousness along with them from their previous orthodox education and environment. But their efforts have failed to convert the worldly-minded. And to save themselves they have even gone so far as to introduce methods of the orthodox which they at first had derided. Altogether it presents a spectacle of high pretension which has run a swift course of disappointment and failure.

Since this affords poor argument for the reality of Modernism, consider further, how the following particulars will strike you, on which they bank so heavily.

1. Against their religious standpoint I bring these objections:

Their very God is devoid of reality, because He is but an abstraction. I know that the Modernist is not aware of this, because he worships, loves and praises a something which he calls "God". Through personification he attributes entity and personal existence to that "something". He ascribes to it power to influence his moral life. Whatever he conceives of as being highest and best is comprehended in his "idea of God". He feels himself entirely absorbed in this self-invented "God". He is so completely dominated by this "idea of God" that he rests with complete confidence in him as the sum of all good and sure to triumph over everything. But does it follow from this that this actually answers to a *living* God? The Modernist follows the method of Dante in creating his Beatrice, of Schiller and his Laura, to answer to their ideas and feelings. And these poets made their fair ones very real to themselves as Schiller later acknowledged. The Modernist has indeed need of worshipping, and so creates an image of the eternal, lovely and beautiful, which however lacks the virtue of existence. They worship the reflex of their own imagination. They cannot admit that this should not be real. This spiritual

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condition of illusionment is not capable of discerning between appearance and reality. Only then, when the Living God reveals Himself and His exalted majesty and holiness is realized, will the pleasing self-deception evaporate in thin air.

And would you ask how we *are* to decide between reality and appearance? There is only one way possible; namely, that God has revealed Himself, that God *has spoken*.

Consider also the matter of prayer whether in this highest expression of the soul the unreality of the Modernist idea of God is not confirmed.

Prayer has always been offered in every place, men have prayed in every age and clime, in the simple trust that the praying heart was met by a listening ear from on high, and that in the answering of prayer the reality of the Eternal was best evidenced. But behold! In flat contradiction of every age and nation the Modernist now comes to tell us that thus far nobody has ever understood the nature of prayer, for it is not an exercise designed to secure answers to requests, but it is only an outpouring of the soul. The Modernist may use the word prayer, but his view of it is a fanatical exaltation of spirit, a dialogue with himself, a self-discovery. Now, while there are some elements of truth in this representation, the preferring of your wants at the Throne of Grace for help in time of need really *begins* in connection with such exercise of the soul.

Finally, if the Modernist would be consistent, his view of providence must be repudiated. The good and the evil in nature, on his showing, cannot be harmonized. Modernism may not ignore the facts and is obliged to do one of two things: either surrender belief in the existence of love in God, or divine providence in history. If

Modernism, whilst denying the curse, persists in holding that God reveals Himself in nature, then the existence of love in God cannot be maintained; or, if the Modernist does maintain his idea of eternal love, then he is inevitably driven to the awful alternative: we can see nothing of a divine providence.*

2. Turning now to things *ethical* we will examine whether the test of reality can be withstood in *man* as pictured by the Modernist; in the *sin* which he combats; and in the *ethical idea* to which he aspires.

Does man remain a moral being according to Modernist conceptions? Darwinism denies the proper creation of man. It says: "There can be no miracle; hence no partial creation in the world already existing." Two alternatives present themselves: man ceases to be either *ethical*, or, a *unity*, that is, a being. For if man's moral nature is derived from his animal nature, which stands, of course, on the lower plane, the separation between the natures of both is removed, and thus the absolute or specific character of *ethical* life falls away. But if it be argued that such a moral nature was imparted through a new infusion, we have the miracle back again, such argument does not accord with the Modernist principle, and in this way you do not obtain a *being*, but only an appearance, which is divided and put together, and so lacks the unity of root-stock, the unmistakable characteristic of all being.

Nor does Modernism recognize the real character of

* A Congregational minister on the Pacific coast recently said, speaking of the great earthquake in Japan: "In the face of this disaster, how can people believe in an all-powerful God who at the same time is good and loving?..... I have long since surrendered the belief that God is all-powerful and that He can do anything He wanted to do..... I believe that God is finite.....and is bound by the laws which He has established for the universe." (Our Hope, 1923, p. 266; cited by G. H. H.)

sin. What thus far was called immoral was revised into "not yet" moral. To them the whole matter becomes one of degree, where the demarcation is hard to give. Therefore the notion of sin is misunderstood; in fact, Opzoomer went so far as to hold that sin and holiness were indeed separate states for us but not with God. A so-called feeling of guilt is of kin with the restlessness and dissatisfaction of the artist who as yet failed to attain his ideal. Now this sounds well in refined circles. But what do you make of the human hyenas, of grinding cupidity, of loathsome vice? Such denials of realities tend to cause one's blood to boil.

Their ethical ideal possesses just as little reality, for it is not the fulness itself, but the demand that that fulness may come about. They aspire after it, but it must never be attained, for then it would lose the character of an ideal. This view I take exception to. My ideal is that which makes me blessed and happy in a higher and holier sense, which completely fills and permeates me. But then it must not be an empty demand, but must be that fulness of wealth from which we receive, as John says, grace for grace. In this way you do not climb up to your ideal, but your ideal descends within you. We do not so much seek the ideal as that the ideal seeks us, seizes us, conquers us lavishing all the depths of our being with its irresistible fulness. Not "become perfect" but "be perfect", not "become holy" but "be holy" is therefore the message of the eternal ideal for him who has heard the divine "It is finished!" on Golgotha. The cradle of Bethlehem, and behind Golgotha the opened sepulcher, are the holy realities in which that ideal only can be known. The knowledge that the Word has become flesh, and its acceptance by faith are the conditions on which yearning turns into enjoyment.

3. In order to ascertain whether a larger measure of reality inheres in the *theology* of Modernism, we shall now inquire after its historical sense, its critical methods and its dogmatic basis.

Does the Modernist have a true sense of the historical? You have seen the anachronism of clothing Bible personages in modern dress. Thus Modernism invests history with a construction which is alien to it. Modernism must either yield before the facts, or else it construes the facts to suit its ideas of what the facts ought to be and mean. The evidence of the Gospels is not taken as it presents itself, but the Modernist determines what part of the Gospels and the Epistles is evidence, and he construes it all to accord with his preconceived notions.

Then, their critical method could not serve them to good purpose, because, thinking they saw objectively, their criticism broke all connection with life. If I am to determine the purity of gold, I am first to make sure that the touchstone I employ, is really such. Between the object that you choose and the touchstone you employ, there must exist congruity. However, Modernism calls this prejudice, a determining of results beforehand. As if one would dare judge of the beauty of colors lacking the power to perceive them. Such is the case here. To our observation the phenomenon of Christianity presents itself with a spirit, a language and a life of its own. A healthy criticism would say: You cannot pass competent judgment except you possess that sympathy which enables you to enter into its life. Not so, says the Modernist; the object must be determined by the investigator. And with a criticism run wild, he must determine everything, but is not himself amenable to control. As a result he can be sure of nothing, and Christianity is apt to be destroyed. Thus Scholten, of Leyden, in 1858 enthusias-

tically defended the authenticity of the Gospel of John, barring a few verses, because the persons were so historical, the connections so intimate, and everything so plainly carried the marks of naturalness, of genuineness. Nevertheless, that same Prof. Scholten three years later wrote a book in which he argued that all these very selfsame things proved the non-genuineness of the entire Gospel just as clearly!

4. The same situation applies to their *dogmatics*. How much soever Modernists look askance at dogmatics, they are themselves the most stiff-necked dogmatists out. For, a dogma is a tenet which you want to see accepted by others on the penalty of being held in error. "We confess", says the Church, "and he who believes otherwise should depart from our midst." The Modernist likewise says: "We confess, and whoever thinks otherwise forfeits his claim to the title of being an enlightened, cultured person." Or tell me, what else are they than unproved premises, and on their standpoint cheap dogmas when Modernism proceeds from this general outline of their faith? "I, Modernist, believe in a God who is the Father of all men; and in Jesus, not the Christ, but the Rabbi of Nazareth. I believe in man who is good by nature and only needs to strive after perfection. I believe that sin is relative; that pardon of sin is a matter of human invention. I believe in the hope of a better life, and the salvation of all without coming into judgment." Of course, he is welcome to believe such things, but it is also our right to challenge their lack of reality. Because the note of a dogma must be this particular thing that, independent of the changes of opinions, it indicates those groundlines by means of which the holy truth throughout the ages finds its secure position for appropriation and further elaboration. Their dogmas, on the contrary, are

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merely an abstract of ideas current in the market-places of life, ill-considered and unrelated to a definite origin. Behold, how often and how fast these dogmas can be recast, and tell me whether you can believe in the reality of a dogma which leans on what it should itself support and which is ashamed of its own character. For in Modernism public opinion has taken the place of the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

5. Finally, their *Church* lacks every attribute which determines its character as such. The Church of Jesus cannot be merely the society of all who live for the ideal; nor, because Modernism loves free investigation, can it claim a unity of aim and spirit with the Reformers who opposed Rome with the same demand. There is a difference between the free investigation of the child who breaks his toys to pieces and that of the merchant who examines his pearls whether they are genuine or not. You have to trace out the attributes of a Church as such to determine whether you have one answering to it. Subjective opinion here amounts to very little. When, then, history teaches you that one of the undeniable characteristics of the Church ever was to banish the very things you Modernists hold so true, judge ye yourselves whether the spirit of your tendency can consist with it. The idea of a Church must be defined to make sure that that belongs to it which has a right to belong to it. A Church is something very peculiarly and specifically Christian. An objective, well-considered collation of the data of Scripture can determine this.

* * * *

Wherever then we cast our plummet the bottom of reality sank away. No real God, no true prayer, no real providence, the reality of human life threatened, sin

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unreal, no actual ideal, no true history, no sound criticism, no consistent dogma, and as little a real Church. We found the names of all these things; the shadows, but not the roots of actuality. And still it brings a blessing in so far as to compel us once more diligently to give ourselves an account of the reasons for the faith that is in us. When indifference and lethargy threaten to destroy our Christianity, it is well that evil doctrines come in to chastise us. But this is not the first time that a heresy has invaded the Church which threatens to uproot everything. In the early Christian centuries Arianism threatened to do the same. And F. C. Baur, himself an apostle of Modernism, has said that this Arianism has in common with Modernism these two fundamental characteristics: a lack of reality in religious life, and refusal to honor Christianity as the absolute revelation of God. Dr. Reville, in a work on the Deity of Christ, points to the same family likeness which in the progressive development of Modernism will become ever clearer.

And the parallel goes even farther. According to Dr. Reville, Arianism found its greatest support in the cultured classes; the common people leaned mostly towards orthodoxy. The State took the side of Arianism even unto violence. May we be spared such things!

I was once a Modernist myself, and have dreamed its dreams, and have called it slander when others said I did not see what I thought I saw. And it was then that I saw the magical illusion of the Morgana and its beautiful fabrics sank away to my sight into airy nothings when a soft zephyr from Above caused the horizon of my life to become tremulous, and ere long in the rising glory of my Lord and King true reality appeared.

Doubt in the realities of life is the vampire which seeks to destroy everything. It is again beginning to

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attach itself to the arms of our present-day life to inject its poison. Do ye wish to save her, ye apostles of the new faith? The mirage you conjure up can afford but temporary stimulus: reaction will come. The cry is for reality. What the Modernist offers will not avail. Its principle is one of doubt, uncertainty: it holds nothing tangible. Once sliding down this declivity, it will be hard to call a halt; for where are we? and whither are we going? We cannot thrive on phantoms and illusions. We need the substantial. And what fits our need better than the glorious language of the Apostle John:

“That which was from the beginning;
That which we have heard;
That which we have seen with our eyes;
That which we beheld;
And our hands handled concerning the Word of Life”—

in that, and in that alone lies our strength. That alone is the ideal, for in that alone we see the resplendent reflection of what is eternally true and good and beautiful.

Indeed, ye Modernists will join us in this praise. But this is the great difference: ye have nothing *but* the ideal, whereas the Church of Christ confesses belief in an ideal which was real from eternity and was manifested in the flesh. Here yawns an unfathomable chasm which makes you other than the Church of Christ, in that ye indeed have the Word, but ye allow it to glitter in charming Morgana's, whilst the Church of Christ enters into the real sanctuary on whose sill God Triune has graven with diamond pencil this sublime declaration of Eternal Love: “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten of the Father,—full of Grace and Truth!”

CHAPTER III

THE PRINCIPLES OF AUTHORITY

The problem of authority in religion has in these days presented itself to the churches with peculiar force and insistence. Even the laity and the secular press have become interested in the question, and have taken animated part in the discussion. Indeed, the matter is of tremendous importance because of its far-reaching implications and consequences. Such questions as these are asked: What is Christianity, and how shall we know it? Where is it to be found? On what grounds can we believe what it is? On whose authority can we receive its contents as truth?

There have been three principal answers to such questions, each answer so distinctive as to be generic. Namely, the view of the Roman Catholic, of the Reformed, and of the Rationalist. Speaking from the Reformed standpoint, as we are bound to do, we believe that we occupy the vantage-ground of being in possession of true knowledge and pure faith. We then regard as the one extreme, that of the Roman Catholic, which verges on a mechanical conception of things, and which engenders superstition and tyranny. And the other extreme is that of the Rationalist, whose subjective viewpoint ministers to doubt and unbelief.

Each view is motivated by what is called a "principle"; that is to say, each view is dominated by a specific conception of things which carries its own necessary logical outcome. A principle acts as a driving-force which runs its inevitable course. Thus each principle constitutes a

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generic type which is definitely marked off from the others. There is no evolution of principles: it is each "after its kind". As they flow forth from distinctive conceptions resting in the very constitution of things, their number can neither be increased nor diminished. There may be mixtures, as we shall see; but these confuse and mislead: they do not serve the truth. We can therefore look for the presence of these principles in the course of church history. Indeed, each of them has appeared and reappeared in more or less pronounced forms. They developed a distinct crisis in the sixteenth century; and in this twentieth century they again have asserted themselves with new force.

Since principles are of such decisive importance, it is imperative fully to understand them. This will insure correct procedure in their treatment. It is of course unfair to proceed from one principle, and to avail oneself of the fruits which have been derived from another. It is this from which the religious world of to-day is suffering so greatly. Large numbers are reasoning on religion from the Rationalistic principle, and, unbeknown to themselves, they are accepting to some extent the content of revelation, and that in a way which practically means revelation brought down in a supernatural manner. This creates misunderstanding: this tends to confusion and harm. The matter needs to be considered and followed up from its bed-rock foundations. Thus it will be possible the better to approximate the truth.

Let us briefly indicate the salient points of each of these three principles of authority.

1. The Roman Catholic principle of authority is the Church. Roman Catholicism maintains that it is the only church, and hence her voice alone is valid. This Church is apostolic in origin; it has continued throughout the

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centuries in the succession of bishops as the authorities in the Church. It has the Holy Spirit ever abiding in its midst as infallible teacher and guide. It has the deposit of faith; is its trustee, its guardian and its interpreter. It interprets Scripture according to the mind of the Holy Spirit because He is specifically given to this Church and so teaches His very own. It has tradition, whose validity is guaranteed in the same manner.

2. The second principle of authority is that distinctly set forth in the days of the Reformation, and is therefore called the Reformed principle of authority. The formal principle of the Reformation is Scripture as source of authority. This Scripture is complete, self-sufficient and autopistic; that is, it is to be believed on its own account and to be interpreted in its own light.

3. The third principle of authority is the Reason. The human mind takes cognizance of all things. It sizes up and estimates according to inner credibility and logic whatever comes before it. It sits in judgment on historical fact. When the Reason considers the phenomena of Christianity, the method is called Rationalism. And this again has its various forms, and obtains in various degrees, coming under such designations as Liberalism, Latitudinarianism, Modernism, etc. In its worst forms it issues into Agnosticism and Atheism.

No one will deny that God is the absolute authority. But *this* is the question: Has He spoken? Has He declared or revealed His will to man? This is answered in different ways according to the principles of authority already noted. Now the Reformed answer: We would not know where to find revelation except in the Holy Scriptures. Hence they have called the Bible the *material principle of authority*, and it was the *formal principle of the Reformation*, validated in the consciousness of the

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believer through the testimony of the Holy Spirit. The Church can be a source of authority only in a derivative sense: it is the organization which *exhibits* the knowledge of God (1 Tim. 3:15). And the Reason is the instrument of the soul of man by which he *apprehends* and *assimilates* God's revelation. Even Dr. C. A. Briggs in his "The Bible, the Church, and the Reason" does not coördinate them, but he also makes the latter two dependent upon the former. He says: "This doctrine of the independent sovereign authority of Holy Scripture as sufficient of itself to convince, assure and give infallible certitude to men as regards its own authority, is one of the most precious doctrines of the Reformation. The divine authority of Holy Scripture consists in the presence and power of God in it and with it" (p. 4). "The Reason and the conscience respond to the teachings of God's Word and bow to its divine authority; but nothing shall be imposed upon the reason and the conscience by the church that is contrary to the Word, or beside it and not determined by it. The reason and the conscience are authoritative in all matters of faith and worship not defined by Scripture" (p. 35). However, when Briggs speaks of the Reason as a "fountain of authority", he uses that term in a different sense than as he applies it to Scripture; he really characterizes the reason as the instrument of intelligence and not as an actual *source* of divine knowledge. Further, he says: "The Reformers rescued the Holy Scriptures from the domination of the Church and they maintained the right of the reason. . . . Such evidence [i.e., the very best external evidence] is the highest evidence which can be produced until the divine Spirit Himself, who guided the writers of the Holy Scriptures, also speaks in our hearts, *in the forms of the Reason* [our Italics] the confirming word, for 'Our full

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persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward working of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts' " (p. 74).

We do not forget that there are some views which might also pass for principles of authority and so seem to add to the number held above to be limited to three. Thus, *feeling* has been held to be the real motive power of spiritual life, partaking of the nature of a principle of authority. Schleiermacher is the great representative of this idea and his view has very largely influenced the theology of to-day. But on careful consideration it must appear plain that feeling, being very closely related to reason as another faculty of the soul, these are mutually dependent upon each other, they function reciprocally. Even feeling has its reasons even though often obscure: it acts as it desires to do for reasons of its own. "It is said that Schleiermacher overcame Rationalism. That is so; but in his raising feeling to its eminence, he had indeed shut the front door, but at the same time he opened a backdoor through which the enemy returned in a new dress. It seemed that theology had come to better things, but alas, it had only turned into a by-path" (Steffens).

"It was tried not only with feeling, the *conscience* also was to serve as rule of faith and practice. Claus Harms correctly affirmed that just as reason had reigned in the church in the eighteenth century, so in the nineteenth conscience had become an authoritative power. Not what the Bible said was rule, but that which carried away the approval of conscience was the rule of conduct, and was praised as being infallible, standing even above the Word of God" (Steffens). We ask once more, on what grounds could conscience act in the way it does, if not

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through reason? The estimates and the judgments of the reason give conscience its direction. If then the Word of God has not become its norm, it can only be the reason which here determines; so that the principle of conscience is simply a species of Rationalism whose method it follows.

This exaltation of the Word above reason, feeling and conscience does not put these on non-activity. "Each has its own place and value. However, only then will they have value when they take the place which belongs to them. Reason was given to man in order that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, he might contemplate with rapture and adoration the glory of the truth which God revealed. Feeling has been imparted to us that it might be the expression of sorrow over our sins and of joy over our redemption in Christ. Conscience has been given as a sort of alarm-clock, which, made effective through contact with God's Word, is to accompany us in this life to constantly keep us awake. Each performs an excellent function if subordinated to the Word of God, but they will lead into error if separated from it" (Steffens).

There is still another variation of type which might seem to give the best principle of authority: it is a type so plausible as to carry away as well the learned as the unsophisticated by its witchery. It is this: Jesus is the great personality whom we must love and follow; his spirit will operate as a corrective of all ills. We need not trouble about the old Testament, about Paul and his epistles, about doctrine or church, if we only have Jesus: *His person and his words* are the real authority.

But this view again resolves itself into the principle of the Rationalist. How do they know who Jesus is? And how can they be sure of the recorded sayings as being

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his? What part of the testimony concerning him in the Gospels will they accept? On a close examination it will all come down to subjective estimation of the writings we have from the early Christian centuries. As this is left to the individual good pleasure there is no telling what the outcome can be. The "feelings" of heart which such people cherish are apt to evaporate as new estimates of the reason enter in. All these views agree in this that the Bible has a subordinate position, all or part of it being rejected according to the subjective impulse and judgment.

In this discussion it is our chief purpose to illustrate and maintain the Reformed principle of authority as over against that of the Rationalist. Each will be considered in their specific characters and followed out to their logical conclusions.

McClintock and Strong's Encyclopedia gives the following clear account of Rationalism, whose ear-marks appear more or less pronounced in every form of it. "Rationalism is a term applied to a specific movement in theology which assumed definite shape about the middle of the eighteenth century, and culminated in the first decades of the nineteenth. Its chief seat was in Protestant Germany. Its distinguishing trait consisted in erecting the human understanding into a supreme judge over the Word of God, and thus, by implication, denying the importance, and even necessity of any miraculous revelation whatever. But a tendency to rationalism has existed to some degree wherever human thought has made the least advance. Especially are its outbreaks distinctly recognizable at several points along the course of the history of theology; and in several countries it has existed as a clearly defined movement even before its full development in Germany.

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"In Germany the full tide of revolutionary criticism takes systematic form in Semler of Halle. By Semler almost the whole circle of orthodox landmarks was thrown into confusion; the Bible-text was assailed; the pertinency of standard proof-texts was denied; the genuineness of Biblical books was contested; the foundation was dashed away from numerous usages and dogmas which had hitherto passed absolutely unassailable. Although many of the points which Semler made were subsequently further developed and accepted as sound, yet the immediate effect in *his* day was to throw doubt into the whole arsenal of orthodoxy" (VIII. 921).

We have here an account of Rationalism in its scientific and in a rather vicious form. But the principle is of a generic type. And the question is, whether even the better forms are not apt to revert to type in course of time. Hagenbach's "History of Doctrine" gives the following illuminating judgment:

"German Rationalism has, at least, retained an historical and Scriptural Christianity, and by making use of ecclesiastical institutions, e. g., by preaching, endeavored to promote the spread of moral and religious principles, especially in opposition to pantheistic tendencies which threaten to destroy the sense of true morality. Thus we may be permitted, in due acknowledgement of its merits, to speak of a *Christian Rationalism*" (II. 396, 397).

Hagenbach is courteous indeed to speak as well as he does of this German Rationalism and to call it Christian. But what does this mean? We fear the designation betrays an impure classification. It can be called Christian only in so far that it used Christian terms, but the root is wholly bad and destructive of Christianity. It is a thing of lead, and though gold-plated ever so heavily as to deceive the very elect, it is of the evil one.

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We must therefore estimate Rationalism in its core, diverted of the elements which do not belong to it, that is to say, divested of the *glory* which it has *borrowed* from the Christianity it dishonors. For this double-dealing complicates the situation in confusing people in their attempt to arrive at a correct estimate. Does the Rationalist believe in any revelation at all worthy the name? Is he not confusing it with the inspiration of genius and the like? There is so much haziness and equivocation about their conceptions and constructions of things, and degrees therein, as to make it difficult to come to clear-cut issues. If they believe in a real revelation, where is it? If it is to be found in Scripture, by what criterion may they reject any part of it? If reason gives the content to religious ideas, is it any longer revelation? Looking at its methods and operations it is clear that Rationalism leans on its own understanding. Through his reason he takes God under examination, and he thinks he can draw out from Him what he wants to know; one might almost say, he forces Him to give testimony to suit the fancy of the examiner. Man sets himself up as judge, and he imagines he gets the facts as they are, while he really determines how he wants them to be. Thus the entire animus and proceeding is subjective; the objective hardly exists for him: what it seems to be is the creature of his own imagination. The inscrutable and unfathomable bents and dispositions of the human mind and nature furnish the basis of knowledge and the method of acquiring it. Faith therefore can best see how Rationalism runs in the mould of fallen human nature; that it is self-centered, proud, and hostile to the divine righteousness.

Now Christianity is based on revelation, without which it would be worth little more than Buddhism or Confucianism. Revelation stands before us as something

objective: we could not know the thoughts of God if He were not pleased to speak, to reveal Himself. Hence we must take the testimony from Him as He gives it, and not manipulate it to suit our fancy, or to remove the difficulties which exist in our finite comprehension. It is a choice between something that has been presented to our notice and what we think we can make of it; between fact and fancy. Objectively, we have something on which we can plant our feet: subjectively, we sail upon an immense ocean of possibilities and uncertainties.

"The Reformation, we are told, has delivered us from an infallible man, but gave us instead an infallible book whose despotism is as bad as that of the pope. The task of our times, they say, is to break down the infallibility of the book and to enthrone reason and conscience; i.e., as I would say, the infallible individual. Mystically inclined adherents of the 'inner light' in our days tell us that we do not need the book, for we have the person of Christ, and we believe in Him and not in a dead letter. And all this we have to believe on the authority of these good souls who draw these tremendous statements from the recesses of their hearts" (Steffens).

"There is nothing more important in the age in which we live than to bear constantly in mind that all the Christianity of Christianity rests precisely on 'external authority'. Religion, of course, we can have without 'external authority', for man is a religious animal, and will function religiously always and everywhere. But Christianity, no. Christianity rests on 'external authority', and that for the very good reason that it is not a product of man's religious sentiment, but is a gift of God. To ask us to set aside 'external authority' and throw ourselves back on what we find within us alone — call it by whatever name ye choose, 'religious experience',

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'the Christian consciousness', 'the inner light', 'the immanent divine' — is to ask us to discard Christianity and revert to natural religion" (Warfield).

It has been said that this orthodox view is Romanizing in its character in that it is based upon an external authority. This is true or not true according to the terms of the comparison. The fact that human beings have two legs in common with the fowls does not constitute them one genus. Likewise, while it is true that Roman Catholics and Reformed both rest their authority for religion on something external, they are, as a matter of fact, quite diverse in that they do this each on their own characteristic principle. And as over against the Catholic and the Reformed the consistent Liberal is even worse off for the grounds of his religion in that he has little authority worth mentioning, as it practically is based upon himself, upon private views, so that he falls outside the pale of revelation and occupies the position of the pagan.

And, pray, consider when we proceed on the principle of Rationalism in what endless difficulty we involve ourselves, what confusion we make! We ask, what ground is there for the reliability of such knowledge? What authority can it impose upon those who seek guidance for an eternal destiny? What value can there be in a multitude of diverse counsels? Where a thousand or more subjectivities speak, all more or less diverse, on which one shall the soul place reliance? Who gives the facts of eternal import? Everything hangs at such loose ends that all claims to reliability are self-condemned, and Agnosticism has every right to feel justified.

And still the Rationalist has an amazing amount of religious knowledge which he could not possibly have evolved from mere reason. Whence did he get it? After all, he has a fund of impressions and beliefs which he has

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derived from *revelation*, however much he may think he has struggled free from it. The afterglow of the sunlight of revelation still sheds its blessed light upon the hostile investigator. He thinks human reason in the course of time evolved it; he is mistaken: he does not realize what an impossible task that would have been. However, as the sure basis of revelation is being forsaken, and one doctrine and fact after another is being thrown overboard, a process of disintegration is bound to set in which will cause mind and heart to revert more and more to the spiritual darkness of paganism. The rationalistic principle, though at first so largely tinged with Christian ideas, must struggle with the principle of faith, but will eventually gain upon it. Semler, the father of German Rationalism, was a pious man, but in his disciples the logical thing happened. Jacobi said he was a heathen with his head, but a Christian in his heart. Degeneration will soon also invade the heart. There will be no halt in the downward course to unbelief except that the mercies of the Lord which are sovereign and free, intervene, and in His own good time the Spirit of the Lord once more touches the heart and illumines the mind with new life and light. The instances are numerous. Dr. A. Kuyper, of The Netherlands, sat at the feet of Professors Kuenen, Scholten and other Liberals, and imbibed their teachings. But the cry of the hungry soul, the practical experiences of life, deeper study of the principles of revelation completely changed him, and he most heartily espoused the cause of the Reformers, developing the Reformed faith according to its inner principles, and insisting upon the mysticism of the heart as regulated by the Word. Paul M. Kanamori, of Japan, was a signal trophy of grace in the early days of Japanese missions; he engaged in Christian work; he went to the professorial chair; ac-

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quaintance with Rationalism so shook his faith that dense spiritual darkness fell upon him for years, till the providence of God led him out into the renewed vision of the light anchored as he became once more on the undoubted basis of divine revelation.

Now consider carefully where our point of departure must lie in these matters of eternal import. The idea of religion has to do with those needs and impulses which are due to man's having been created in the image of God. Such is the spiritual constitution of man that he can find satisfaction for his real self only in God. His disregard of his spiritual welfare does not change this, for he is or will find himself unhappy without such rest in God. Ideally speaking, then, we may say that the spirit of man thirsts after God, after the Living God. Hence the question will never down: Will God answer the cry of the soul? The Reformed so believe; and they call His answer Revelation. The Reformed principle of authority is due to the belief in a personal God; that He is interested in the works of His hands; that He reveals Himself to His rational creatures; and that the deposit of this revelation can be found nowhere else except in the Holy Scriptures. "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son" (Heb. 1:1, 2). And now for these nearly two thousand years this world has not heard His voice. All that we have is the record thereof — Holy Scripture. If it be doubted whether He spake in this, we simply have nothing, and Agnosticism will be the sensible alternative. It all becomes a question of fact and identity. Since Rationalism does not commend itself because of its exceeding great poverty of guarantees, and its subjectivity which from the nature of the case is *not* revelation,

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all hope of having anything reliable in that direction is cut off. A prospect of possessing something real and authoritative rests in the Reformed view that God has revealed Himself and that Holy Scripture is the sum-total record of this revelation. This, then, is the Reformed *principle* of authority, that is, we hold this *in an axiomatic way*. Now it is not expected that axioms shall be proved: that cannot be done: axioms are accepted as a working basis on which to go on further. And similarly the Reformed principle of authority becomes *the only workable principle* — the only one which will prove to accord with facts and experiences. This principle commends itself not only for what it is, but every consideration supports it, justifies it. Like the fitting together of the various irregular pieces of a dissected map which cannot possibly be fitted together in any other way than in the only one right way, so the facts of existence and life can bring no harmony to the thought, nor satisfaction to the heart except on that which comes through the use of the Reformed principle of authority. Let it be admitted that it is based on an immense postulation; it is to be remembered as well *that the principle of Rationalism is also based on a postulation* which is far from satisfactory as it involves us in a maze of far worse difficulties. We therefore most heartily accept the principle of the Reformers which has been most effective in its operation, and has afforded the greatest satisfaction in the contemplation of the mind enlightened by the spirit of God.

We shall now quote writers from the days of the Reformation and immediately after to give their construction of their principle of authority. First of all John Calvin, that man of remarkable mental and spiritual powers whose fame can never die:

“But I answer that the testimony of the Spirit is more

excellent than that of all reason. For as God is a capable witness in His Word in regard to Himself, likewise that Word will not find credence in the hearts of men before it is attested by the internal witness of the Spirit. Therefore it is necessary that this selfsame spirit who has spoken by the mouth of the prophets shall enter into our hearts in order to convince us that they have faithfully spoken what had been divinely commanded them”.

“This therefore ought to be established that they who have been taught by the Holy Spirit in their heart, rest completely in the Scriptures as being credible on their own account and may not subject its truth to argumentation and reasonings; inasmuch as they acquire that credibility, which they have with us, through the testimony of the Spirit. For although Scripture through its majesty readily procures reverence, it does not seriously affect us till it is sealed in our hearts by the Spirit. When then we are illumined through His power, we believe that the Scriptures are from God, not through our own quality or that of others; but, going above human judgment, we postulate as surer than sure that they flowed unto us through the ministry of men from the very mouth of God, indeed in no other way than as if we there beheld the godhead of God Himself” (Institutes I. 7. 4, 5).

The Gallican Confession gives a similar statement:

“We know these books to be canonical, and the sure rule of our faith, not so much by the common accord and consent of the Church, as by the testimony and inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to distinguish them from other ecclesiastical books” (Art. IV).

And the Westminster Confession:

“We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church, to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy

Scripture; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet notwithstanding our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts" (I. 56).

Of course, the modern mind will hear such language with a smile and consider us who accept it as naive. But why should this be thought so strange *when it is the only avenue left open to us* through which we can obtain the knowledge of the issues of life and eternity, and on an authority as high as the Maker thereof and the Ruler therein? What is our great hope, our exceeding comfort, our final dependence? The answer is so important, that at the risk of repetition, we say once more: We have actually obtained a revelation from Heaven; this is the Holy Scripture; this Scripture is not only a *source* of knowledge to us, but more than that: it is a *method* — it is the *axiomatic*, the best ground, even as in mathematics the axioms are the surest of truths. Thus we have something objective before us, sufficient and complete after the manner in which God operates; thus we have been made acquainted with the mind of God in a way suitable to our condition and situation. He that made Heaven and all things that in them are, also made every human being in His image, with such obligations of service as this relationship entails. He furnished him with that information which is necessary to make these things possible of being discharged. There will therefore be a

glorious destiny in store for those who will fall in with His holy will, ready to enter into all the wise and sovereign arrangements for meeting God's glory and man's eternal happiness. For all these things a reliable revelation is necessary. The Reformed principle of authority is the only principle which answers all the conditions.

Dr. Kuyper has always insisted that any denial of revelation robs us of what is truly a theology, for theology is the science *of the knowledge of God*, and that is nothing unless based upon revelation. Hence he has insisted that any Liberal scheme of theology so-called is really a "philosophy of religion", thus coördinating all religions and making each as authoritative as the next one. It is therefore honest that that outspoken Liberal Journal "The Christian Century" calls itself "*A Journal of Religion*". Thus we also read of the "Yale School of Religion". All this is borne out by the pertinent quotation and remarks of Dr. A. H. Strong in his "A Tour of Missions". We read: "Prof. Kirsopp Lake, in a recent address before the Harvard Divinity School, deprecated the use of the term "theology". "Theology", he said, "presupposes divine revelation, which we do not accept". He proposed the term "philosophy", as expressive of the aim of the Unitarian School. This is honest and plain. What shall we say of those who speak of the "new emphasis" needed in modern theology, when they really mean that the preaching of the old doctrines of sin and salvation must give place to "another gospel" of coöperative Christian work? From their neglect to put any further emphasis upon "the faith once for all delivered to the saints", we can only infer that, for their structure of doctrine, no other foundation than philosophy is needed, and that they, like the Unitarians, no longer accept the fact of a divine revelation. To lay greater

emphasis upon the fruits of Christianity than upon its roots, is to insult Christ, and ultimately to make Christianity itself only one of the many earth-born religions, powerless like them either to save the individual soul or to redeem society. Professor Lake is quite right: If there is no divine revelation, there can be, not only no systematic theology, but no theology at all.

"What is the effect of this method upon our theological seminaries? It is to deprive the gospel messenger of all definiteness, and to make professors and students disseminators of all doubts. Ask him if he believes in the pre-existence, deity, virgin birth, miracles, atoning death, physical resurrection, omnipresence, and omnipotence of Christ, and he denies your right to require of him any statement of his own beliefs. It is no wonder that our modern critics cry, "Back to Christ", for this means, "Away from Paul". The result of such teaching in our seminaries is that the student, unless he has had a Pauline experience before he came, has all his early conceptions of Scripture and of Christian doctrine weakened, has no longer any positive message to deliver, loses the ardor of his love for Christ, and at his graduation leaves the seminary, not to become preacher or pastor as he had once hoped, but to sow his doubts broadcast, as teacher in some college, as editor of some religious journal, as secretary of some Y.M.C.A., or as agent of some mutual life insurance company. The theological seminaries of almost all our denominations are becoming so infected with this grievous error, that they are not so much organs of Christ, as they are organs of Antichrist.

"What is the effect of this method of interpretation upon the churches of our denomination? It is to cut the tap-root of their strength, and to imperil their very existence. The unbelief in our seminary teaching

is like a blinding mist which is slowly settling upon our churches, and is gradually abolishing, not only all definite views of Christian doctrine, but also all conviction of duty to "contend earnestly for the faith" of our fathers It is refusal to rally to Christ's colors in the great conflict with error and sin. We are ceasing to be evangelistic as well as evangelical, and if this downward progress continues, we shall in due time cease to exist" (pp. 188 sqq).

Sufficient light has been shed upon the three great principles of authority to bring out the enduring character of the Reformation. As all these principles have in greater or lesser degree wrestled for expression in the consciousness of the Church, not till the sixteenth century have they attained a clearness of development such as should no longer cause us to mistake their character. The modern view-point is boasted of as a new one. Not so; it is but a restatement with greater circumstantiality and clearness of what obtained long ago. Even Higher Criticism is not that recent thing which formerly was unknown. Says Bavinck: "In former times criticism of the Scriptures was not absent. The Gnostics, Manicheans and sects of the Middle Ages related to them, tore the New Testament from the Old, and ascribed the latter to a lower God, the demiurg. Especially Marcion, in his Antitheses, and his pupils, Apelles and Tatian, setting out from the Pauline antithesis between righteousness and grace, law and gospel, works and faith, flesh and spirit, attacked the Old Testament on account of its anthropomorphisms, its contradictions, its immorality, and they said that a God who is angry, who repents, who avenges, who is jealous, who condones theft and falsehood, who comes down, etc., is not the true God. They were very particular to point to the great difference between the

true Messiah and the Messiah as the Jews expected. Marcion threw away all writings of the New Testament except those of Luke and Paul, and even these he abridged and interpolated. Celsus continued the battle in an able manner, and sharply criticized the first chapters of Genesis, the days of creation, the creation of man, the temptation, the fall, the deluge, the ark, the building of the tower of Babel, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Jonah, Daniel, the supernatural birth of Jesus, the baptism, the resurrection, and the miracles, and he accused Jesus and the apostles of deception. Porphyry made a beginning with historical criticism of the books of the Bible, he opposed the allegorical exegesis of the Old Testament; he ascribed the Pentateuch to Ezra; he regarded Daniel as a product from the days of Antiochus; and he subjected many accounts in the Gospels to a searching criticism. Nevertheless Scripture attained general and undisputed authority, and criticism was forgotten. It revived in the days of the renaissance, but even then the Reformation and the Catholic Counter-reformation held it up for a time. Presently criticism once more revived in Rationalism, Deism, and the French Revolution. At first it attacked the contents of Scripture in the Rationalism of the eighteenth century; thereafter it attacked the genuineness of the writings in the historical spirit of the nineteenth century. Porphyry took the place of Celsus, Renan follows Voltaire, Paulus of Heidelberg prepares the way for Strauss and Baur. But the result is always the same, Scripture is a book full of error and falsehood" (Dogm. I. 317).

It must then be evident that there is nothing new in the Modernist movement. The old serpent of doubt who once raised the question, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not", repeatedly raised his head however often

abashed. All your vaunted "reconstruction of theology" is a barren thing in itself, and also a *reversion to the old falsehoods*: instead of development, it is *definite departure* from well established foundations. It is *revolution*. What seems new is but a restatement with greater circumstantiality and clearness of what was thought long ago. Whatever promise of good Modernism shows is like the foliage of the tree which has been felled: the shoots which it still puts forth are due to some remaining vitality, but this is not a testimony favorable to the condition of death into which the tree has virtually come.

And now we have the new movement in America. Our country has been blessed above all others with an active, evangelical, consecrated Christianity. Its great revivals in which the Holy Spirit has worked so mightily, the great movements of reform, benevolence which has astounded the world, foreign missions, yea, countless agencies for the amelioration of the lot of the miserable — all these are the fruits of the godliness of the Puritan, the Knickerbocker, the Huguenot, whose faith was forged in the fires of persecution, whose faith rested in the sure Word of God witnessed in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. Why then has Modernism come in, completely at variance with the things which made the fathers strong and great? We must not seek the immediate answer in the worldliness and materialism of the times, because the evil has arisen in the very midst of the ministers of the Word. Why then has it arisen there? Dr. Bavinck answers as follows:

"The Reformation took its position not in natural reason but in the Christian faith Which rests on God's authority alone, and is wrought through the Holy Spirit. But Protestant theologians have not always maintained this principle, and have often turned

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back to the doctrine of a natural theology and of historical proofs for the proof of revelation." Bavinck then adverts to the fact that this is the fault in such men as Butler, Paley, Chalmers, A. B. Bruce, McPheeters, etc. And he continues: "This has unintentionally contributed to emancipate reason from faith, and to locate the dogmata of a natural theology and of the Holy Scriptures outsidess of the *fides salvifica*". With this then as was to be expected rationalism put in its appearance in Protestant Churches" (Dogm. 1. 427). For this reason even Dr. C. A. Briggs has characterized the development of theology in America as "sickly". And Prof. Kemper Fullerton, of Oberlin, (as we shall point out in our next chapter) adverts to conditions which further supports such testimony, coming as it does out of the Modernist camp itself.

This situation therefore at once indicates the remedy. It is to return to the principles of the Reformation. Had our fathers heeded the Latin saying: "*Principiis obsta*" [withstand the beginnings] much trouble would have been avoided. Let us consider our ways and return. There is still hope. There is still enough of the saving salt of faith. This must not lose its savor. Unless a halt is called, the evil of rationalism will run its disastrous course, and even Modernists can look on with apprehension — if they have eyes to see.

In a lecture on the New Theology delivered in January 1887 by my honored instructor in Systematic Theology, Prof. N. M. Steffens, D.D., occurs this striking sentence which has been in great measure fulfilled, now almost forty years after: "I am not a prophet, but I would not be surprised if the track in which the New Theology runs, will finally lead to an Idealistic Rationalism!" That is exactly what Modernism is.

CHAPTER IV

DIVINE ORIGIN AND UNIQUE CHARACTER OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

The question of the origin and character of the Holy Scriptures is one of great importance. Very much depends upon it. No wonder that determined controversy has raged around this question. On the one hand, frantic attempts have been made to demonstrate the reality of the Divine revelation: whilst, on the other hand, the directly Divine origin of Scripture has been as stoutly denied. Difficulty has been experienced in stating clearly what constitutes the canonicity of any part of Scripture. Says Professor Kemper Fullerton, of Oberlin, in his "Prophecy and Authority": "While the Post-Reformation theologians clung to the doctrine of an infallible Scripture, Protestant scholars have followed the lead of the Reformation principle of exegesis [which is, that the "sense of Scripture was not threefold or fourfold, but one, and that this was the grammatico-historical sense" (p. 117), understood by Fullerton as ruling out any deeper lying or mystical meaning by him regularly called 'allegorizing'] In the great battle of the nineteenth century over the higher criticism the fallibility of the content was established, and an historical conception of the Scripture has been substituted for a dogmatic conception. This involves a change in the conception of the canon. There is no longer any such thing as an infallibly authenticated canon of Scripture" (pp. 186, 188).

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The general situation will appear from the following extracts taken from the introductory part of Fullerton's book. "Now the settlement of the question of the Bible, its nature and authority, is of fundamental importance to the life and effective work of the Protestant Churches But there are many indications that the attitude of the Churches towards this *principium* of their ecclesiastical life is confused, irresolute." This is very true, for the reason *that the later Protestant Church neglected to learn and understand the real Reformation ground for the canonicity of the Scriptures*. Generally, our American theologians reason for the canonicity of Scripture on the premises of the liberal — historical criticism; they are there compelled to make the best of a very vulnerable situation. This is borne out by Fullerton's statement that they largely accepted the results of historical criticism with the "changed views of its authority which they necessitate". He takes for granted that the results of modern research must be accepted, with which, of course, the old-time conception of the authority of Scripture falls. He continues: "The conviction which prompts to the publication of this volume is that Protestants must come to terms with itself as to its own principium and frankly adopt the results of modern biblical scholarship" (xiv). He accurately seizes upon the real point at issue. And what does Fullerton think of the old-fashioned ground for the authority of Scripture? "Now the premise of a dogmatic theory of Scripture is an unproved premise. Nor has it the quality of an axiom as has often been imagined. The *testimonium Spiritus Sancti* [testimony of the Holy Spirit] which is supposed to apply at this point, may apply to the religious content of Scripture, but it certainly cannot apply to Scripture as a whole" (pp. xv, xvi). This opinion fails to recognize a distinctly

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Divine character which attaches to the canonical Scriptures, and it reckons with the human aspect only. It therefore busies itself exclusively with historical criticism, which indeed has its legitimate use, but it ignores the more important Divine element. Dr. B. Weiss, in his "Manual of Introduction to the New Testament", states the matter more correctly in these words: "Only so much is clear, that the Criticism which makes Christianity as such emerge from the strife and gradual reconciliation of the incompatible opposites, and finds in our New Testament nothing but memorials of a doctrinal, historical process continuing till beyond the middle of the second century does away with the idea of a Canon in the proper sense of the word" (p. 148). Hence, "historical research should rather seek with perfect freedom to settle the origin of each individual writing on the basis of external and internal evidence. The result of this examination will then first suffice to form the foundation of a judgment with respect to the traditional Canon. But this judgment is equally dependent on the doctrinal construction of the conception of the Canon, that is to say, on the question whether such construction makes the criterion of Canon to consist in that which is genuinely apostolic, or in a wider sense memorials of apostolic times, attesting each individual writing before the tribunal of the religious consciousness of the ancient Church or of the present" (pp. 147, 148). It will be noticed that the last clause of this quotation virtually recognizes the 'testimony of the Holy Spirit'.

This idea of Canon began to arise in the earliest times, somewhat vaguely at first, as could readily be expected. Origen is the first to give it some definite expression; his main contention has proven to be so correct that it practically is the same as that of orthodox Protestant

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writers. Says Weiss: "Origen expressly states that the 'Sacred Writings' of the Old and New Testament are the true sources by which Christian doctrine may be proved, inasmuch as the sacred books are not 'mere documents', but were written 'out of the thinking of the Holy Spirit'..... Hence it is necessary to know accurately what writings belong to the *Scriptura*, and Origen is the first who lays down a fixed principle in the matter, viz., that the 'first tradition of the Church' (*prima et ecclesiastica traditio*) must decide, and therefore that only those Scriptures belong to it '*to which every Christian consents and believes*', those '*which have been believed to be sacred in all the churches*' " (Manual of Intr. to the N. T., I. 110, 111).

This dogmatic conception of the Canon already indicated by Origen finds small response to-day, because in current discussion the original Protestant line of argument has been neglected, and faulty grounds have been offered to prove the authority of Scripture. The consequence is, as Fullerton correctly states, that the "attitude of the Churches towards this *principium* of ecclesiastical life is confused, irresolute". It is therefore very necessary that this confusion and irresolution come to an end on the part of evangelical believers. We must give up the attempt to prove the Divine origin and unique character of Scripture on conventional lines, and we must put it back in the wholly exceptional position where it belongs. That is to say: We must not establish it by discursive reasoning, or base it on certain external criteria, as being products of Apostles or of apostolic men: these criteria are of subordinate value only. On the contrary, the original Protestant principle requires that its Divine origin and unique character be attested by the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer, or as Dr.

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Weiss expresses it, "before the tribunal of the religious consciousness". Our Belgic Confession of Faith thus puts it: "We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith, believing without any doubt all things contained in them, not so much because the church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts that they are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves" (Art. VI). Hence we must simply maintain the canonicity of the Scriptures as we have them, recognized as a matter of fact only by those who are of the Spirit. It cannot be helped that this gives a strongly dogmatic cast to the discussion, and savors of apodictic assertion. But our opponents, who complain of this, forget that they do exactly the same thing: they too proceed from premises which are as axiomatic, even though they profess to be particularly subject to reason. They proceed, namely, from the axiom that human reason is competent and self-sufficient to discern and judge of all things, even the deep things of God. While we acknowledge that this too is a dogmatic procedure on *their* part, we do not complain of it, since they *cannot* do otherwise — they cannot discern the things of the Spirit. And they should allow *us* the right to build upon our own principium. For since principia, like the axioms in mathematics, cannot in themselves be the subject of discussion with the design of establishing their correctness, so the more pertinent thing to do, if we are to reach results, is to ascertain which of these divergent principia best squares with the experiences of life, of reality.

At the outset of our discussion it is necessary to bear in mind something which radically determines the question at issue; a matter which Fullerton and the like deny,

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as they rest their theology on a naturalistic basis. We refer to the fact of Palingenesis [Regeneration]: its presence or absence divides all people into two classes. It is a difference which "does not have its origin within the province of consciousness, but outside of it. This difference is not one of degree but of essence, and is of so radical a nature that it cannot be bridged. They face the cosmos in a radically different manner and are each actuated by altogether different impulses. Mere argument is not capable of convincing either for the contrary view. Whilst they may agree on the formal aspects of scientific research, it is impossible for them to agree on its material aspects. The choice which is made in this aspect of things is not determined by discursive reasoning, but entirely by the deep impulses of the consciousness. Scientific investigation, then, is in its deepest conception also determined by this two-fold insight. It is indeed possible that some regenerate people may be so deceived in their reasoning as to proceed on the naturalistic basis whilst retaining the faith which lies hidden in the mysticism of the heart. It is also true that Palingenesis does not at once remove the after-effects of the old unregenerate nature which plays its part in showing a false subjectivism which must be patiently overcome. They actually stand in the faith, although they do not perceive that their true foundation is gone, and that, fortunately, they are acting inconsistently. When they become aware of this situation and essay to act according to the demands of the reason as based on worldly principles they become prone to much confusion and darkness. Light can break out only then, when they take the correct position of Scripture as the Word of God validated by the testimony of the Holy Spirit. But the deep-lying principle, given a fair and sufficient occasion,

will assert itself one way or the other, so showing its real self, and will arrive at perfection" (Kuyper, Encyc.)

The province and the competency of the reason in this connection must therefore be well understood. When we choose in favor of Scripture as our principle of knowledge as over against the reason, we do not design to abdicate the use of our mental faculties in seeking to understand the revelation of God, or to pass an opinion on its grace and grandeur. That is not the point at issue. The precise point is this: The Rationalist derives the *material*, which he chooses to accept for his faith and conduct, *out of himself*; whilst the Reformed derives it from an objective source, from a revelation, and he holds that Scripture *is the revelation*. The Reformed uses his reason to think about this revelation, to construe and assimilate it; whilst the Modernist, in greater or lesser degree, *manufactures* it, so to speak: he is entirely subjective, for he determines by his own light and according to his own good pleasure what he judges ought to be the truth. Bacon has well put it: "The rationalists are like the spiders: they spin all out of their own bowels. But give me one who like the bee hath a middle faculty, gathering from abroad, and digesting that which is gathered by his own virtue." Dr. Thornwell, in quoting this from Bacon, correctly remarks that this illustrates the Protestant principle. The Reformers believed in an objective revelation which man has not himself made nor formulated, but *he finds himself in the presence of it*, and like the bee he is to proceed to make use of it. We make use of our reason in connection with passing on Scripture as ground for our beliefs and practices, but *in a secondary way*; that is to say, the reason *per se* does not determine what is spiritual truth, but *it acts in the presence or absence of dispositions and powers of the*

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human spirit. For in our deepest self we are regenerate or unregenerate, and inasmuch as the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God because they are spiritually discerned, the reason in the natural man will assume an antagonistic attitude and will not be convinced. But he that is spiritual will find the reason perceiving the more clearly the things of the Spirit of God. *We cannot go back of these premises: debating back of these is but a dead-lock.*

"This fact of the existence of these two classes of people, also, strictly speaking, postulates two kinds of scientific investigation, because radically different world- and life-views underlie each of them. It is this circumstance which particularly affects Christian theology as it discusses a range of conceptions which from the nature of the case directly concern the things which can be spiritually judged only. This fact absolutely denies those who stand outside the Palingenesis the competency of judging in the premises.

"Two principia (methods of acquiring knowledge) underlie the situation. 1. Man takes knowledge of almost everything by bringing the objects before himself and proceeding to investigate them. 2. But of God he cannot thus obtain knowledge — what he thinks he knows through his own agency, is mere guess-work: it is necessary *that God reveal Himself to man*, and man can deal only with what is revealed to him. Hence, theology is obliged to proceed in a way all her own, as she is dependent for her material on what Scripture *furnishes*; whence Scripture as the source of his information imparted by a method in which man is entirely dependent, is called the principium unicum theologiae" (cf. Encyc. II. sec. 32).

Now Scripture as the revelation of the knowledge of

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God must be trustworthy. This it can be only when it is given by inspiration of God. We believe that Holy Scripture as a book before us is the inspired Word of God. It will be asked, How do you know this? This cannot adequately be answered except that it satisfies the believer who is constrained so to receive it; and that believer does so receive it, because the Spirit in his heart witnesses with his own spirit that he is a child of God and that this Scripture is the message of the Holy Spirit to him. "The Reformed were led to acknowledge the sole authority of the Holy Scripture by the subject matter contained in them brought home to their minds and hearts by the working of the Holy Spirit. It is the testimony of this Spirit whereby they were assured of the sovereignty of the Bible, in matters of faith" (Steffens). Of course, this cannot be objectively proved, and many scoff at such an assertion as mere cant. But Thornwell puts it pointedly: "The reality of evidence is one thing, the power of perceiving it, is quite another. It is no objection to the brilliancy of the sun if it fails to illuminate the blind." Scripture attests the very same truth: "For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged." In its final analysis these things cannot be proven except that the proof consist in the testimony of the Holy Spirit to our spirit that these Scriptures are the Word of God. They are therefore *autopistic*, as the Reformed principle of the Reformation so clearly and so necessarily brought out, in order to have any real foundation at all. "Just as your person through optical processes photographs itself upon the plate of the artist, so it is revelation itself which gives its own *effulgence* in Holy Scripture" (Kuyper). And it need not be strange to have recourse to such a principle

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for the purpose of gaining this particular kind of certainty in the unusual realm of spiritual things, because we, living as we do more immediately on the natural plane, "gain our certainty in regard to material things by virtue of a *testimony of God the Creator* in the individual consciousness" (Kuyper). It is far too much overlooked that in its deepest analysis the natural man in the functioning of his sense-perception even, is as dependent upon God as the spiritual man is for saving grace. "For in Him we live and move and have our being." And Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Art thou a master in Israel and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John 3:10—12).

To throw some more light on this highly important matter, we can do no better than to quote the language of the late Dr. Herman Bavinck, of the Free University of Amsterdam, who was known not only as a widely read and able theologian, but also peculiarly well versed in the problems of philosophy. He too stresses the fundamental contention of the Reformers that Scripture is *autopistic*; that is, to be received on its own account. He writes: "Holy Scripture is autopistic, and therefore the last ground of faith. If you ask, Why do you believe Scripture? the only answer is, Because it is the Word of God. But if you ask further: Why do you believe that Scripture is the Word of God? the Christian must remain indebted for the answer. We may indeed refer to the characteristics of Scripture, to the majesty of its style, etc., but these are not the grounds of his faith: they are merely properties and characteristics which in course

of time were discovered through believing thought. "God has spoken" is the prime principle to which all dogmas, that of Scripture included, can be led back. The bond between the soul and Scripture lies behind consciousness and under the proofs. It is mystic in nature in the same way as the deepest principles of the different sciences are" (Dogmatiek).

And how carefully and pertinently Bavinck sets forth the philosophical aspect of the matter, the following quotation shows, in which he touches the vital point at issue: "We cannot dispense with the subjective, not in a single science. Light postulates an eye. All that is objective exists for us simply through the mediation of subjective consciousness. In common with all sciences, yea, with all relations which obtain between man and the world, theology has the subjective starting-point. However, the accusation of subjectivism is justified only in that case when the subjective organ, which is indispensable for the observation of that which exists objectively, *is raised to the principle of knowledge*. The eye may be indispensable as the organ of observation of light, but it is nevertheless *not* the *fountain* of light. This is exactly the mistake of idealistic rationalism *that it identifies the organ with the source of knowledge*" [My italics].

In a similar manner Dr. J. H. Thornwell, that brilliant theologian of the South, thoroughly Reformed in his views of doctrine and church polity, writes: "The Protestant principle is that the truths of the Bible authenticate themselves as Divine by their own light. Faith is an intuition awakened by the Holy Ghost, and the truth is neither known nor believed until it is consciously realized by the illuminated mind as the truth of God. Intuition does not *generate*, but it *perceives* the truth. Reason under the guidance of the Holy Spirit appropriates and

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digests it. The knowledge is immediate and infallible. . . . The Word supplies an external test which protects from imposture and deceit. The Spirit educates and unfolds a Divine life under the regulative guidance of the Word. The Bible and the Spirit are therefore equally essential to a Protestant theology" (Works, I. 49). Again: "Reason, though wholly incapable of discovering the data in the free acts of the Divine will, yet when these are once given can discern the obligation which naturally arise from them. It can discern the fit and becoming in the new circumstances in which we are placed, and it can collect, compose and elaborate into scientific unity the truths which are brought within its reach. But in no case is reason the ultimate rule of faith. No authority can be higher than the direct testimony of God, and no certainty can be greater than that imparted by the Spirit shining on the Word" (Works, I. 50). "The reality of evidence is one thing, the power of perceiving it is quite another. It is no objection to the brilliancy of the sun that it fails to illumine the blind" (Works, III. 445).

The reader will perceive that here we come to bed-rock conceptions of things where argument and the use of the reason to directly establish matters of spiritual import will be of no avail. The Rationalist scoffs at the Reformed conception of things as being obscurantist as he persists in harping on the same one old string of forcing the Divine into human terms and valuations. It cannot be done. Kuyper has well expressed it: "The controversy over the reality of inspiration may therefore as well be given up, because the consciousness in regard to it stands altogether on one line with all our primordial notions, as the consciousness of our Ego, of our being, of our continuity, of our thought processes, etc. Because these things are primordial *they are sufficient in themselves*,

and, allowing of no demonstration, they can neither be silenced by contrary argument. And in so far, then, our Fathers were entirely correct when they based their confession of the Scripture on no other testimony than that of the Holy Spirit" (Encyc. II. 306, 307). Fullerton has this very thing in mind when he *characterizes* this view, which is regarded by us as axiomatic, but is by him believed as resting on the imagination for its truth, and that its premise is unproved. Indeed, we do not even attempt to prove the premise, because along with other primordial notions it cannot be done.

It is therefore a matter of course that "theology proceeds on premises which are *sui generis*. This is owing to the fact that both through the history of the Church in general and through the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the individual a special relation obtains between Scripture and the investigator — a relation which in that same Scripture is described as a "trembling at the Word of God". The Holy Spirit who gave the Word answers to the Holy Spirit dwelling in the heart of the believer. This mystical fact may not be lost sight of for a moment.

Kuyper beautifully describes the blessed matter-of-fact of the hidden knowledge of the heart—call it mysticism, if you will—which rests in the experience of its own assurance after the manner of the blind man who was healed by the Savior, and who repelled all doubts by the immovable conviction of reality: "Whether he be a sinner or not, I do not know: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see!" Says Kuyper: "A Christian lives by the Scriptures and serenely enjoys this life. The studies which examine the Scriptures by which the Christian lives, do not *determine* this life: they can only *elucidate* the existing phenomena. Thus, a man's breathing through his lungs does not begin by permission

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of the scientist who studies their actions, but he breathes as a matter of fact. Now canonical studies can give this living by the Word a purer direction, if only this living by Scripture remain our point of departure in its historico-mystical sense. Hence the object of canonical studies can never determine for anyone what constitutes Scripture. For the heart of every believer and for the Church as a whole *Scripture is what she is* not as the result of study, but as a result of historical and spiritual-mystical factors. Canonical study can only *interpret* some things as far as these do not remain hidden in the depths of mysticism" (Encyc. III. 25, 26).

But there is a very practical, matter-of-fact proof which amply justifies these seemingly esoteric positions. Kuyper again indicates it: "After the manner of the correlation of the pieces of a dissected map, or of the members of an organism, so the correlation of the parts of Scripture (canon) is indicated by inspiration in the nature of these parts themselves. But just as a child does not immediately get an idea of the full and correct arrangement of the pieces of a dissected map, and at first is apt to make mistakes and only in course of time arrives at certainty, so also the eye of the Church has in the course of time begun to perceive the canonical connection of the parts of Scripture to that extent that with full assurance of mind she has observed in it the certain indication of the Holy Spirit" (Dict. Dogm. De Sacra Scr. 86, 87).

"As a matter of fact Scripture has come into existence under the operation partly of spiritual factors, partly of historical factors whether human or divine, and as the product of these factors Scripture became the possession of the Church: it was not given mechanically, but organically. Even though men deliberated and considered, they

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were, unbeknown to themselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So that at bottom of this all rules the providence of God, who, throughout every form of human activity gave His Word to the world, the written '*kanon*' [rule, or, standard of measurement and comparison] even as He Himself is the Personal '*Kanon*' for man" (Kuyper).

That the Reformed do full justice to the human aspects of these matters is thus brought out by Steffens: "Our formal principle does not extinguish in us the historical spirit; on the contrary, nowhere is this spirit found in a healthier state than in the loyal sons of the Reformed Church. We desire to stand everywhere on a solid historical foundation. But when Higher or Newer Criticism degenerates into an arbitrary reconstruction of history, when we are called upon to remove a huge pyramid from its base and try to put it on its apex, we stand aloof from such a foolish and hopeless undertaking. And when the critics of our age demand from us to look upon the prophets of old as enemies of the ceremonial law teaching us by their doctrines and examples to eliminate from what they call the "genuine religion of the Old Testament", not merely the ritual but also the atoning significance of the sacrifices, the Theology of Blood; or when they ask us to look upon the priests and Levites as hypocritical formalists and bigots, who used their position and religious influence in the interests of the State; then we feel it our duty to enter our protest against such a destructive radicalism, and to raise our banner—the sovereign authority of the Holy Scriptures—in the interest of Bible truth. In upholding this banner let us be willing to bear the ignominy of being called unscientific and fanatical."

How then in short are we to conceive of the Canon?

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Let Kuyper again answer: "The idea then of the Canon is not according to what notion men of the Church decided what should belong to Scripture, but according to the thought which God has Himself, and which He gets brought out in Scripture. And under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the Divine will comes to man through the instrumentality of the Scriptures. It must be added that *the assembling* of the books of the Bible did not occur as a result of immediate inspiration, *but as the result of the enlightened consciousness of believers* whose spiritual feelings began to recognize more and more clearly what is Scripture. Such it was with the Canon of the Old Testament, and Christ sanctioned this collection as the Word of God."

Fullerton notes the interesting fact that Clement of Alexandria and Origen already in that early age half unconsciously stood on the foundation of the correct view of the principle of the Canon (from the orthodox standpoint). "They had a supreme confidence in the self-sufficiency of Scripture. It was its own interpreter. Its great Christian truths were *self-authenticated* to the spiritually illuminated. All that was necessary to do was to elaborate the *technique* of the allegory in order to possess the key to all biblical mysteries. And this Origen did. He sought to place the allegory on a scientific basis" ("Proph. and Authority", p. 80). Says Kuyper: "Origen and they who came after him may have come short in the elaboration of this idea, nevertheless the principle from which they proceeded stands high *on account of its intrinsic truth* above the insipid flatness of narrow-minded interpreters who cannot believe in the mystical element which is back of the written word" (Encyc. III. 160).

"These Scriptures do not lie loose beside the theologian but in the mysticism of his heart he knows himself *bound*

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to them and to its authority with a special bond which nothing can break. For him the drawing of this bond is not the result of scientific investigation: he even denies to science the competency of judging in regard to the reality of this mystical bond. This bond to Scripture is *inwoven* with the life of the soul, and he asks leave of science to have it so as little as he asks the permission of science to breathe."

"It is admitted that the approach of the believer to Scripture as he accepts its authority in advance *is a prejudiced one*. But *for the other it is just as true that he is prejudiced* in favor of the authority of the reason, of the common opinion of the doctors, and for him it can never lie in Scripture as such. Scripture itself compels this alternative. Just because it places itself antithetically over against the *vox mundi*, the investigator must either honor the *vox Dei* or deny it. No one can stand neutral over against Scripture. It is a canonical investigation for him who bows to the authority of Scripture; and anti-canonical to the other. In both cases the investigator is, before he begins his work, predisposed as to the matter *in the center of his consciousness* one way or the other. If one lives by virtue of the Palingenesis, then the mysticism of the heart will correspond with these Scriptures; but if one lives outside of the Palingenesis and hence out of a sinful nature, then the mysticism of the heart will stand antithetically over against the mysticism of Scripture. When people have received a good education, then out of that mysticism of the heart will come a *two-fold* world- and life-view, each in principle diverse from the other; the one postulating Scripture, and the other, having no room for it, will attempt to eliminate it. Every attempt to convince the latter by means of argument must be given up as completely as when Jesus

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forebore to convince the Sanhedrin to the contrary when they had firmly made up their mind that he was a blasphemer."

"The task of the exegesis of Scripture is by no means ended with an inquiry as to what the writer *may himself* have thought to write. In her Bible the Church does not possess a collection *merely* of literary products, for the Church is not a literary or historical society, but she is the gathering of believers who lay hold on eternal life. To this end she received Scripture as a means of grace, and in order that Scripture should be such, it came into existence and was completed as a Divine work of art with the unity of functioning which characterizes a living organism. It is so rich a Divine work of art and is designed so marvelously that throughout all ages the Church might be edified by it, and that the ministry of the Word might find out of these Scriptures *the solution of every question*. Hence, back of the literary and grammatical meaning there also obtains a deeper lying mystical one. Origen and others after him have failed in correctly working out this idea, but the idea has far more of inherent value than the insipid prosaic, interpretation of rationalizers which naturally begets spiritual aridity" (Encyc. III. 100).

The mystical interpretation has always invited attack, and to-day Modernist Theology does this with new vigor. Fullerton's book is courageous in assuming the full consequences of his premises, so that he rejects plenary inspiration, and prophecy of every kind, and leaves a very uncertain and indefinite basis for the very uncertain thing which he makes of Christianity. With the Divine origin and unique character of Holy Scripture gone, we may well cry out in despair: "What is Christianity?" — the very question on which thousands have to-day become

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unsettled. *The Reformed principle of authority which determines the divine origin and unique character of Scripture is the only thing which will put a solid foundation under the tottering structure of historical Christianity.*

CHAPTER V

A CONCRETE EXAMPLE OF MODERNIST THEOLOGY

In order to show how in concrete form the Rationalist principle of authority works out, we shall examine an address delivered in St. Aldates, Oxford, England, by Canon E. W. Barnes on "Authority in Religion". This address is an able one and thoroughly characteristic of Modernism. In fact, folks were so much taken up with it that the address appeared both in *Christian Work* and in *The Christian Century*. As this address turns on the foundations of religious belief, and raises the issue between the Reformed conception of authority and that of Modernism, now unhappily becoming so prevalent, and which is bewitching the minds of those who ought to know better, it is well that our Reformed ministers and the laity have an opportunity to carefully examine the matter. Very vital matters are at stake, even the very integrity of Reformed theology. Modernism will undo the great gain which the Reformation brought, and will plunge us into chaos. It is very easily possible that many a bewildered soul will, like Cardinal Newman, finally find refuge in the Church of Rome. When, as in the case of the Cardinal, the first principles of the Reformed authority are not understood, the logic of events readily leads unto Rome or else to the other extreme, Agnosticism.

That we are not painting too dark a picture became very evident from an Editorial in *The Christian Century*

of Jan. 3, 1924, entitled: "Fundamentalism and Modernism: Two Religions". With sharp discrimination that article correctly sizes up the situation. It asks: "Or are the fundamentalists right in claiming that the issue is a grave one, going to the roots of religious conviction and involving the basic purpose and almost the genius of Christianity itself?"

It continues: "A candid reply to such inquiries must be one of agreement with the fundamentalist claim. It is to be doubted that the average churchman whose sympathies are in the main with modernism has any adequate appreciation of the sharpness and depth of the issue. . . . that they are foundation differences, structural differences, amounting in their radical dissimilarity almost to the differences between two distinct religions. . . . Two world-views, two moral ideals, two sets of personal attitudes have clashed, and it is a case of ostrich-like intelligence blindly to deny and evade the searching and serious character of the issue. . . . Which is the truer Christian religion, is the question that is to be settled. . ."

The article concludes: "It is not merely the aggressiveness of fundamentalism that is forcing a choice, it is the inherent nature of the issue itself. Two worlds have crashed, the world of tradition and the world of modernism. One is scholastic, static, authoritarian, individualistic; the other is vital, dynamic, free, social." To abbreviate: "The God, the Christ, the Bible, the church, the kingdom, the salvation, the consummation of all things—these are one thing to the fundamentalists, and another thing to modernists."

This is honestly spoken and fearlessly avowed. We shall now turn to Canon Barnes' address to see how correct it all is.

Canon Barnes raises the question: "Can we be content

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with the idea of an infallible book or an infallible formula or an infallible institution? If not, how can we find religious certainty amid the modern chaos of religious opinion?" You see, the Canon acknowledges the existence of a *chaos*: that acknowledgment on his part forebodes ill. But the common people are not aware of the situation and its tendencies, and without accounting for continuing to hold what they have, are neither inquiring for the grounds thereof. If they did, they might be shaken in mind so much as also to lose the foundations of whatever good they have, and the chaos would truly become appalling. It is imperative therefore to look a little into the foundations on which the fathers stood, and to show the nature of the shifting quicksand on which the Modernist banks so much.

The issue appears when the Canon asks the question: "But the mere suggestion of religious evolution raises the inquiry whether Christianity can be rightly regarded as a special revelation of God to men. Are there elements in it which are definite and final? If so, what are they, and how are they guaranteed? We are confronted by the problem of authority."

Here, then, are three questions. How does the Canon proceed to answer them? In beginning to answer these questions he is not very clear, and we will simply remark, that while there is development in Christian doctrine, as all agree, results have been reached thus far which are by no means negligible; that is to say, much doctrine has been pretty well crystallized, so much so, that new developments are largely a matter of detail. These elaborations of doctrine, while not claiming absolute infallibility, are nevertheless, we most confidently believe, *made in the right direction*: again and again they have been subjected to the test of Scripture with no other result. However;

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the Modernist proceeds under another principle which obtained in more or less degree from the beginning of the Christian era, and what he tries to do under the beautiful name of development (or evolution) is simply *degeneration*, or better still, *reversion to type*. So-called "reconstruction of theology" is *not development*, but *a revival of heresy*. These modern developments are of a revolutionary character: they break with all real Christianity, for its real foundations are made to hang in the air, as will be shown further along.

Half way the article the Canon states what he intends to prove, viz.: "Why he cannot find in the visible church, or in any branch of it, authoritative basis of Christianity." We will not quarrel with this, although something can be said in favor of this particular matter. More to the point just now is what follows: "Can we find it in the Bible?" Canon Barnes says he would answer: "Yes", and "No". He calls it a "short-cut to authority" when we postulate an "infallible, inerrant Bible". We answer: *It is a short-cut to authority of a far worse order to postulate human reason* with its well-known prejudices and its infinite variety of subjective viewpoints. Then, to prove his point, the Canon proceeds to argue the mistakes in the Bible, on which part we need not spend any time now, since the great principle underlying it all is of prime and immediate concern.

An important sentence then follows: "Science and scholarship are a gift of the Holy Spirit of truth." Now, while there is some truth in this assertion, it has a very dangerous side to it. The statement is equivocal. To begin with. Science and scholarship are by no means infallible on physical questions. They have constantly corrected themselves. Further, man with his sinful nature, so easily biased, will not always see clearly on moral

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matters. What then must we say in regard to their reliability of judgment on spiritual matters, which lie on a still higher plane? Can we expect the Holy Spirit to reveal much to the mere man of science, since we read: "For no prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (1 Peter 1:21)? And these men have a special quality; but on the other hand, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged" (1 Cor. 2:14). We conclude then that the Canon's opinion that "science and scholarship are the gifts of the Holy Spirit of truth" is an expression of great relativity and helps us out very little in the question at issue. That expression, strictly speaking, deals only with the formal aspect of the matter, and even there its import is unreliable; how much the less, then, can it be of avail on the material side of the matter which is the very point at issue? We can by no means trust mere science and scholarship as a ground for spiritual matters. To be sure, science, scholarship and the Modernist have made the strong claim that they are the "thinking part of humanity", that the others are the "left-overs", the "obscurantists", "hopelessly behind the times", etc. They are welcome to these opinions; still, we do not trust them. Real need will not down: it cries for revelation. We want to know what God has to say, and therefore we will not listen to the bewildering variety of subjectively conceived ideas.

And even Canon Barnes comes down to this. He feels that after all there must be some objective basis of authority, for he immediately follows his previous quizzical views with: "But none the less, on the Bible we base our faith." We are very glad to read this; but how does

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the Canon do it? In comes the rationalistic principle that the human reason determines this. "In the Bible", he says, "we find a revelation of God's nature and purpose which is the most reasonable that we can conceive." This we also believe, but the Canon develops the idea in such a manner as to make man's judgment decide what shall be believed. And how he can speak of a revelation from God, and then set up his own tests of deciding whether it is this, *whereby he himself is really furnishing the contents of this revelation*, we do not understand.

The question, On what Modernists base their faith? he answers thus: "Its basis is the Bible interpreted in the light of modern knowledge. In our sacred books we find among the Jews the growth of unrivaled spiritual perception culminating in the life and message of Jesus the Christ. The only religious authority which is ultimately cogent for us is the witness of the Spirit of Christ, a witness which is primarily within ourselves. . . . The Church will preserve all that is essential in the Christian revelation so long as its ultimate authority is the response of the spirit of man to the divine spirit of truth and reason."

On its face this passage professes belief in: 1. The life and message of Jesus the Christ; 2. The Holy Spirit who witnesses; and 3. The Christian revelation.

The language as we have given it would hardly indicate anything else than that the Modernist believes these points. But, as a matter of fact, does he?

In examining these three points we will begin with the last one. What does Canon Barnes mean by "the Christian revelation"? The Reformed view of revelation is an objective communication of truths not known before and which was brought to the mind from without by the Holy Spirit. But such is not the Modernist view. The differ-

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ence is well expressed by Archbishop Trench: "God's revelation of Himself is the drawing back of the vail or curtain which concealed Him from man; not man finding out God, but God discovering Himself to man." Now what does Canon Barnes say? "In our sacred books we find among the Jews the growth of unrivaled spiritual perception culminating in the life and message of Jesus the Christ." Note, that he says nothing of a divine communication, but he speaks of a *process*: it is "spiritual perception"; a matter of understanding: subjective, therefore. Sometime after the Stone Age it must have had a beginning, and that, we would say, through mental spontaneous generation. This, too, more or less everywhere amongst all nations, because all have religious ideas. Whilst all men in every region on earth had "spiritual perceptions", among the Jews their growth was "unrivalled". But what needs to be carefully noted is this, that this is not revelation properly so-called. This is human opinion; it is subjective; it has no more authority than as each individual person may choose to regard it. And the consequences of taking any, whichever it be, are negligible. All these men — they may have ever so much genius — simply look out to the Unknown God which their own fancy may have made. They "are feeling after" this Unknown One in order to discover Him. The poor Athenian philosophers whom Paul addressed, did the same thing in their lack of opportunities: but they could not help themselves. However, this is so gratuitous now: the Modernist is throwing away golden opportunities. It is the saddest thing which the angels have had to witness for ever so long a time. The Modernist with all his learning has fallen back upon the old pagan basis of "feeling after Him if haply he may find Him"! What folly has come to possess these

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learned men! And if they use the word revelation in designating their religious perceptions they are not using it honestly. They cover a sort of agnosticism with a phrase which conveys something different than they really mean. It is a pitiful attempt thus to hide spiritual poverty of perception and cover lack of foundations.

Furthermore, it sounds gracious to make the acknowledgment that this "spiritual perception was culminating among the Jews in Jesus the Christ". But now, ask the Modernists, What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? Their answer gives it all away. He is the son of Mary and of a human father. True, he had genius; he had fine religious sensibilities. In addition to the traditions under which his first ideas took form, in addition to the great thoughts and feelings by which other prophets before him had been stirred, Jesus made an advance which made him "unrivalled". But what does even that avail? The Bible as such not being infallible authority, Canon Barnes asks, whether some one in it is? "Is then Jesus our infallible authority? In reply I ask the question, What do you mean by infallible authority?" The Canon in answering his own question then offers some remarks invading even the Savior's reliability.

How serious all this is becomes evident when you consider that the Modernist in his effort to find solid ground has already discounted Paul's ideas as being rabbinistic and philosophical, and similarly something is unreliable in all the other writers. This has made them raise the cry: "Back to Christ". But where are we when even the reliability of Christ is not above reproach? And *The Christian Century* goes Canon Barnes one better because that paper *deletes* one sentence of the Canon's, namely this one: "Nowadays we see in the Bible a new light, but from that light there emerges, brilliant in

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majesty, Jesus the eternal Christ." But even then does not Canon Barnes make of Christ a glittering generality in saying also: "It is on his perfection of moral and spiritual understanding that we base our faith." Because he follows this beautiful expression with something which again shows the virus of rationalism: "And yet we must not take Jesus as a purely external authority, even in this realm. . . . Christ must be an authority within yourself. You must seek to make your own spirit respond to the divine spirit of truth and righteousness. You must bring all knowledge you can get, the finest emotions of your being, to your search for fellowship with the Unseen. Then you will find that the spirit within you is a witness to God, as He was revealed in Jesus the Christ. Faith is not submission to authority: it is the result of consecrating thought, will and feeling. It is the product of yourself at your best." This quotation is very characteristic. It indicates the subjectivism of Modernism with considerable haziness of definition of object. Who is Jesus? Yes, we all agree he is a historical personage. But does the Modernist accept the account of him as given in the four Gospels—the only account available? No, they regard these as giving the impressions of the Apostles in regard to their Master in which unreliable and untrue elements were introduced. What then Jesus actually was, is made out by the judgment of the Modernist: they have all the competency; the "best spirit within you" is authority. This at once destroys the idea of revelation, properly so-called. All rests upon knowledge of what man finds himself to be and wants to make of things. This digs an impassable gulf between the Reformed conception of authority and Modernism. It practically makes two religions as *The Christian Century* has admitted. Whoever therefore loves the Reformed

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Church and its time-tried principles founded upon realities, needs to avoid this rank poison of Modernism which is an arbitrary construction of some historical facts, but generally so construed as to eliminate very vital elements of what constitutes true Christianity.

The Canon then proceeds actually to bring in things objective. "Faith begins in the response of your nature to the all-pervading Spirit of God. He witnesses to Christ." What does the Canon mean in these assertions? Does he refer to the Third Person of the Trinity? We doubt it. To him it is probably only a handy philosophical conception to designate influence. He employs the terms of Scripture and tradition to set forth a sort of Pantheism. Many an unsophisticated Isaac will say of it: "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands and the smell are Esau's." One thing is said, another really meant. In a large sense Modernists hold Christian doctrines while at the same time they reject the basis of their validity. And to establish what? We answer with Shakespeare:

"And give to airy nothings

A local habitation and a name."

For how this vague "Spirit of Christ" witnesses to Christ is another expression of hazy content as vague as it is meaningless. *The phraseology of Christianity furnishes merely a terminology for subjective ideas*, useful too as having in part *awakened* those ideas. Now, if "religion is communion with the Unseen" and that the "best in us" expresses it, what need have we of a Christ whose existence hangs in the air? And what does it profit us to have an "all-pervading Spirit" to "witness" to such a Christ? *There is an isolation about this Christ which can bring no comfort* as its barrenness of results in saving the lost proves its falseness. For what objective realities

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have we thus? How will you determine truth from a thousand differing subjectivities who are not feeling alike? And for what purpose? We flounder in the depths of a bottomless mysticism in so viewing things. Under the principle assumed by Canon Barnes terms have little distinctive value. Buddhism will furnish very nearly the same thing. Why Christ's character and influence should have any more "dynamic" than Buddha's we fail to see; neither why it should not have just as much "authority". Doubts are actually being raised in Modernist circles relative to the necessity of Foreign Missions. Careful direction of the cultural instincts of the heathen will do as much. The Canon's idea of religion means nothing more than that a quality which lies wholly within man rouses itself to noble action. This is Naturalism. It is akin to the baldest Socinianism. This judgment of ours is confirmed by what follows in the Canon's article: "But you find Christ's influence reflected whenever men inspire you with enthusiasm and love for wisdom and goodness." When he calls it a "living power to which you give allegiance", he is using a figure of speech in the way he means it. In literal fact he means to say that the ideals connected with Christ react upon people *by virtue of what these people are in themselves*. And when the Canon deprecates "coercive mechanism of formula and system" and "external claims" and "a book" or "a formula", he misapprehends the Reformed position. The Reformed idea is not that these externals are a number of magical things which effect something *ex opus operato*, but they are the objective realities which place the spiritual facts before us. When then the Third Person of the Trinity (who works where, and when, and how He will) applies them to us, He does so indeed in a manner inscrutable to us, since He works in and upon us as free moral agents.

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Yea more, the connection between the Divine and the human is but faintly understood by us, *but there is such direct connection*. This the rationalist virtually denies. But in the perceptions and operations of the spirit of man *the objective facts of revelation have a dynamic place*. Hence, "the book" is not merely a book; and our doctrines are not merely "external formulas"; *but all these are the facts on which the Holy Spirit and the spirit of man react on each other*. And while "the true life of the spirit is life in Christ", let it be emphatically understood that this must come in connection with the wealth of fact revealed by the Spirit of Truth in His own Book. The Spirit of God, the Word of Scripture and the spirit of man are a trinity whose interrelations of operation are almost as inscrutable as those which obtain in the Adorable Trinity of the Godhead. The Modernist, with all his claim to superior insight, is blinded by the dust of a senseless, soulless naturalism when he places the operations of spiritual forces in a self-centered self. Needs can be filled only by things which have objective reality, and those in the spiritual world have vital connection through the Spirit of God intimately related to the spirit of the believer (cf. Rom. 8:9, 16, 23, 26, 27, etc.). Through the enlightening and warming power of the Holy Spirit there obtains a mysterious satisfaction and exhilaration through such cardinal beliefs as that in God, Maker of Heaven and earth; in Jesus Christ, the Person who of necessity was not entirely of human formation, who lived on earth, who died for our sins, who rose from the dead and ascended to Heaven, and is now seated as a Living One, like unto us except that he is glorified, on the Right Hand of God the Father Almighty and there maketh intercession for us sinners; who sent the Holy Spirit, a Person definitely, objectively real, the Comforter, who has access

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to our hearts and witnesses to Christ in the fulness of his atoning work wherein are taken up all these doctrines which give meaning to that work. He witnesses in a very much different way than Canon Barnes would have us believe. By that Holy Spirit the revelation of divine things was given, the Holy Scriptures, which are not of any "private interpretation", not bubbling up from within ourselves the best we have, but "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). It is of this self-same Scripture that Christ spoke, the man whom the Modernist holds up as their ideal, as their only authority: "Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of Me" (John 5:39). This book somehow, in spite of its human dress, has life: the things mentioned in it accomplish real effects in man. It is true of the Written Word as well as of the Spoken Word, that it is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). In sum, when we argue for the Book we argue for that which, in a sense, is an external matter (God too is an external entity), but this external book, Holy Scripture, is truth and life, and the heart regenerated by the Holy Spirit lives by it and rejoices in it with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

From another article of Canon Barnes, entitled "Are Jesus' Teachings Final?" and which appeared in *The Christian Century* of April 26, 1923, we will give quotations, without comment:

"Jesus took the system of Jewish religious thought, modified and developed it, and left upon it the impress of his own spiritual genius. The faith which resulted

proved able to assimilate some of the most valuable speculations of Greek philosophers."

"Let us now pass to the teaching of Jesus and see how far in the light of modern thought it remains the best interpretation of the spiritual intuitions of humanity. Two facts must be borne in mind. The first and signally important, is that the teaching of Jesus was conjoined with, was in fact a part of, a singularly complete and self-consistent personality."

"But in the second place it must be remembered that we do see Jesus with other men's eyes. They have preserved what to them was especially striking. The sayings will at times be colored by their ideas; the incidents will combine recollection with interpretation—probably the sayings represent our Lord's words with more accuracy than we might expect."

"And yet, on the other hand, there are passages in all the first three gospels—notably the 'little apocalypse', Mark 13 and its parallels—there are these passages where we miss the peculiar quality of thought and expression that we find in the sermon on the mount and elsewhere. In such passages, and also in what I may call the ecclesiastical passages of St. Matthew, we must be prepared to find that Christ's own words have been combined with alien ideas."

"And, similarly, we must be cautious in dealing with the narratives."

"Many still think it a loss to have to admit that in the fourth gospel we have, not a record of Christ's own teaching, but a meditative interpretation of his life and work. We can for ourselves make the transition made by St. Paul and St. John from the Jesus of history to the eternal Christ. We have learned thereby to find the spiritual in the natural, the divine in the human."

A CONCRETE EXAMPLE OF MODERNIST THEOLOGY

"The idea that Christ was inerrant is widely held by those who would be orthodox, but it is heretical."

"Thus, as it seems to me, our ethical convictions lead us still to Christ's theology. Turn to the teachings of Jesus and see with what unerring insight he made goodness central in his teaching. The crown of evolutionary process, as described by modern science, is the ethical progress of man."

God deliver us from the menace of Modernism, for it will bring about anarchy in religion and morals. Such is the bias of the natural heart towards evil, and such is man's unreliability, that we need the discipline of a definite expression of the Divine will with its penalty on transgression. This is not "mere mechanism", for God addresses Himself to moral agents. Let us not find fault with coercion; there must be coercion in its place where the Divine will meets rebellion. This is as vital in religion as the Constitution of the United States of America is vital to our national existence. "This is eternal life, to know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent." To refuse Him must necessarily entail serious consequences. This is objective reality, and we must be ready to believe and obey according to His Law of equity in the premises. In this way the Canon's assertion can be true: "the true life of the spirit is the life in Christ." But there must be a perfect correspondence of conditions. Modernism is far from "putting spiritual things first" (as the Canon would have us believe), *but he is putting empty ideas first*, and its satisfactions are the imaginations of a self-centered heart. Modernism has never been a power of God unto salvation: it is barren of spiritual conquest. It is blight upon the Churches to-day. It is killing missionary work. And its logical outcome can be no other eventually than agnosticism and irreligion.

CHAPTER VI

THE CRITICISM OF THE SCRIPTURES

It was a painful experience to me recently to read William Newton Clarke's "Sixty Years with the Bible". This book is written in an able and engaging manner; it is honest and earnest; nevertheless we cannot forbear to regard it as distinctly harmful to Christianity. Dr. Clarke circumstantially describes by decades the development of his beliefs regarding the Bible, a course which to the orthodox can only be a slow but sure departure from the truth. Says Dr. Clarke: "Many, too, are wondering whether they shall be compelled to go, and are looking with alarm on the perils that beset the way. Very many are pitying those who have been compelled to set forth. Is it possible, these inquirers ask, for a man to make this change with regard to the Bible without losing his faith, not to say his soul?..... Can there possibly be any leading of the Spirit of truth in the experience? Is it not a wandering on the dark mountains without a guide?" (4, 5).

Dr. Clarke beautifully describes the sweet and reverent Christian atmosphere of his home. "My earliest remembrance of it brings up the picture of family worship. How clear it is, and how calm and beautiful! There were five of us—father, mother, and three children, of whom I was the second. In the morning, not before breakfast, but after it, we all sat down with Bibles in our hands, and read in turn three verses apiece..... In this manner day by day the Bible was read through..... The reading

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was followed by solemn prayer, all kneeling. The mental atmosphere of which I was conscious was one of solemnity and reverence. It was assumed, and to me was real, that in dealing with the Bible, I had to do with God. Was it burdensome and hateful? Did we dread the morning worship? No" (12, 13).

In early youth Dr. Clarke made a definite "experience of religion". "When I was sixteen years old my personal religious life began. The blossoming of the long-prepared bud came suddenly, and I was full of fresh delight in the holy interests that were opened to me. Food for my soul I knew was to be found in the Bible, and I remember on the very first day asking my father what in the Bible I should read. I remember where I sat to read it, and what Bible I read it in. I remember the eager expectation with which I began. I remember, too, the effect. My soul was fed with heavenly food. There were solid and splendid expressions of truth there, so clear and glorious that I could not miss them, and so harmonious with my new life that they could not fail of entrance. Some of the divinest words in the world found me that day, and entered into the stock of my life. Nevertheless I rose from the reading with a faint shadow of disappointment. Those magnificent lights of God seemed to shine out through clouds" (21, 22).

Clarke went to college and seminary. He made much study of the Bible, so that, as he says, he was a "firm biblicist". He puts his finger on the very first doubts which began to trouble him without at first being willing to recognize them. But these doubts persisted; they were reinforced by other doubts; he began to be susceptible; he began to give way; at first hesitantly, slowly on more boldly. It all ends in that he becomes an out-spoken Higher Critic, an Evolutionist, a Modernist; and he

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makes no apology for it. As a teacher of theological students he is at pains to say how he labored to drive out of their minds the old-fashioned pre-conceptions which they brought along from their homes. How it grieved us to read: "Students.....are very slow to accept any considerable alteration of their general acceptance of the Bible. Many of them come to us a generation or two behind the times in knowledge of what the Bible is..... Usually his opinions have been taught him and are held in deference to orthodox belief..... But it may be the duty of a theological seminary to shock him out of some of the ideas that he brought with him" (214, 215). Clarke thinks that in this way his students will really have gotten hold of the Bible in its true purpose. That the logic of the situation did not work out worse must be ascribed to the mercies of God, to the triumph of life over logic.

What was the cause of this process of declension from the faith? Dr. Clarke himself states it in the beginning of his book: his theory of inspiration did not permit him to overcome the difficulties he felt. We too believe that he had a defective theological starting-point. And he himself confesses that he never obtained a theory of inspiration. He felt that all were defective, and the right one he did not possess. Hence, he had to get along without any; or, rather, *unwittingly he made his way with a bad one* whose terms he mentions clearly enough but which he did not definitely formulate: it would have frightened him.

The experience and the book of Clarke is a close parallel with the experience of Cardinal Newman and his book, "Apologia pro Vita Sua". It is another very sad case of defection, and all because of the erroneous starting-point. Cardinal Newman, too, as he himself

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circumstantially describes it, was brought up on strictly evangelical lines. He too in early youth had a definite experience of religion. It is curious that despite the events of later years he does not throw away the reality of this work of divine grace. In this case, too, life triumphed over logic.

Cardinal Newman's premises, however, differed from Clarke's in this, that the former rested not so much on the Bible as on the Church with its historic traditions and authority. The relation of the Anglican Church to this brought him difficulty. For many years he sought hard and long to compose the difficulty by resorting to the so-called "via media". But like Clarke, his strict honesty and his fearless meeting of the consequences, while he struggled hard against a stream which carried him where he did not at first want to go, bore him along from point to point till he found himself in the bosom of the Mother Church. How could that come to pass? Very naturally, once more, it was a case of proceeding from a wrong premise and with perfectly logical honesty accepting the conclusion.

Both these striking instances may well impress us *with the supreme importance of proceeding from correct principles*. The examples given are illustrations of the principles of authority as were discussed in our third chapter. Clarke proceeded from the rationalist principle of authority and the good doctor and earnest believer landed in the camp of the Modernist. Newman proceeding from the principle of the authority of the Church, landed in its logical destination, Rome. It behooves us therefore to maintain very jealous guard over *our* principle, to make sure that we are perfectly true to it, and so enjoy its superlative benefits of grace and truth. "*Principiis obsta*", said the ancients; ah, we must take

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heed that we do not mistake our way when we meet the forks in the road which may take us either in one wrong direction or in another. Consonant with our principle of authority it is also of very great importance that we have a theory of inspiration which will sufficiently meet the exigencies of our situation, of the difficulties which they offer.

The important question will be asked, *Has* our principle of authority been maintained in its integrity and, *Have* we been in possession of a suitable doctrine of inspiration? Kuyper in his *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology* in a few masterly strokes describes the situation pointing to a lack of complete correlation of all the elements in the complex problem:

"In so far as the representation of the auctores secundarii as amanuenses of the Holy Spirit. tended exclusively to point out the oneness of conception [i.e. that the Bible is the Word of God in whatever manner the divine and the human elements may be concerned] we have no objection to raise. However, if one goes beyond this, and if, in order to maintain this oneness of conception one shut his eye to the manysidedness and pluriformity of Scripture and to the organic manner in which it eventually was brought about as the result of all sorts of factors, then one will have nothing left except a mechanical rigidity which murders the living, organic unity. Theologians of former times have of course not meant to do this. Indeed, they have even pointed out, oftentimes with considerable detail, the different origins of the books of the Bible, the difference in style and contents, differences in the characters and experiences of the authors, and also the different bearings of the parts of Scripture. But it cannot very well be denied that they shut themselves up rather too strictly to a close-

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fitting theory of inspiration; too much so as to admit of the living organism of Scripture to come to its own" (II. 428).

We call particular attention to this considerate statement as it comes from a strong advocate of orthodoxy in so much that he does not hesitate to call the Bible-writers "amanuenses of the Holy Spirit". Now, while our orthodox theologians in America may be somewhat too much devoted to a strict doctrine of Verbal Inspiration and Inerrancy, on the other hand Modernists and the like must not imagine that they alone see the human elements of Scripture, nor, least of all, have first discovered them. In an important editorial Kuyper had this to say: "The opponents of the time-tried confession of the doctrine of Holy Scripture have already for fifty years [and this was written in 1882] taken the liberty to paint themselves in beautiful colors, and, we know no better word for it, to picture us as *ugly*. From the days of Herder onward it has become a confirmed habit amongst these folks to confide to the public that the old Confession had no eye for the human factor, and that neither person nor character, place nor time, neither choice of words nor style of language are to be considered in this monotonous sameness of dictated texts. They lead the public to think: "What ignorant, densely ignorant, over-credulous people these old church theologians were that they allowed the wool thus to be pulled over their eyes!"* And then they exalt themselves to the skies as they point out how *they* have seen the wonderful diversity and varieties in Scripture. *They* have noticed the freshness and the fullness of life, *they* have discovered and tasted the living

* In the racy original: "Wat domme, aartsdomme, over-onnoozele menschen waren die oude kerktheologen toch dat ze zoo iets zich op den mouw lieten spelden!"

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waters which stream forth from the sacred page. Of course, the orthodox stand self-condemned before the public on such pretentious representations." And a little further we read: "To make an end to this "charge" [Kuyper uses the English word in his Dutch article] for we know no better word for it, and that said 'charge' rests upon pure imagination and ignorance of fact, I will choose my counter-proof not out of the period of the Reformation but out of the theological night of Egyptian darkness, of scholastic subtlety, which in so uncommon a degree is apt to excite the anger of our opponents. Well, then, in that seventeenth century in which, as they aver, the light of the Reformation had again come under the snuffer of scholasticism, after that Synod of Dordt which, as they claim, killed all spiritual life in our land, a handbook of theology was issued which spoke clearly on the question, namely, the well-known "Synopsis Purioris Theologiae". There we read: 'The manner of writing of Scripture was as follows: At one time the Lord God would dictate in such a manner that the writers would simply transcribe the words; as in Ex. 33:27, 28; Apoc. 1:8; etc. Then again the Lord did no more than to help them and to direct their minds so that they themselves functioned as thinkers and composers; e.g., Luke 1:1, 3. For they were by no means always passive, but also acted with their native energy, as men who cherished their own ideals, their minds worked after its own bent; they deliberated, recollected and were idiomatic in their expressions; from this, differences in style resulted, but always in such a manner that the Holy Spirit led and directed them unaware (*occulto instinctu*) and they were thus preserved from error in their thinking, in their memory and composition' ". (De Heraut, No. 232).

Now Kuyper does not want to convey the idea that

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these men gave a full and perfect view of the matter; he only wanted to show that their eye for the main points at issue were to a surprisingly high degree correct, and that their views awaited only that comparatively minor development which further thought brings. These men stated matters, as viewed in the large, on correct lines; *they moved in the right direction*. But note well that what Modernism attempts to-day is not of this nature; *theirs is the method of revolution and a harking back* once more to heretical views which former times have also seen.

Many of us believe that no one in the latter part of the 19th and first part of the 20th centuries is of so commanding importance for the development of Reformed theology as the late Dr. A. Kuyper of The Netherlands. He studied at Leyden under the famous liberals Kuenen, Scholten and others, and imbibed their teachings. But the practical experiences of life, the cry of the hungry soul which touched his heart, deep study of the principles of theology, contact with men and women who were strong in faith and who lived by the Word,—these and other factors wrought a complete change, and as a result his immense learning, his discriminating mind, his insight into the realities of life have combined to cause him to espouse the cause of religion as the Reformers have seen it, as it in their day shook the spiritual foundations of Europe with life from above. This Dr. Kuyper is not one of your narrow-minded moss-backs, whose sanctimoniousness would at once repel any red-blooded man, whose bigotry would blind to the respectful consideration of any contrary opinion. On the contrary, he hated cant, warned against a barren intellectualism, and urgently insisted on a healthy mysticism of true communion with God. He was one of the most genial of men, and bubbled

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over with humor. He was even a man of the world (in a good sense), for he was the accomplished leader of his political party and led it with such consummate ability that from almost nothing it eventually gained once and again a majority of the seats in the States General, and Kuyper himself was Prime Minister for four years. He also founded the Free University of Amsterdam designed to teach the full range of knowledge under the European system of faculties of Theology, Law, Medicine and Letters, all of them to be guided by Reformed principles. Even the theological faculty was not to be bound in an absolute manner to the Church, but to be free within her own domain except that it is firmly committed to teach along Reformed principles.

We mention these things to give weight to the opinions of a man of this comprehensive scholarship. He delved deep down into the meaning of all systems of knowledge, so that with the wealth of his knowledge of philosophy and science he set forth Reformed theology in such a manner as to have given it new life. His method is not repristination, a harking back to old things, but he reckons fully with whatever later thought and new discovery have furnished the alert thinker.

A circumstance, now, of peculiar significance, as 'proving that the scientific study of theology is "up-to-date" in The Netherlands, is the fact that the question of Higher Criticism is not feared, and has actually been recognized in a sense, and its findings made use of. On Oct. 20, 1881, Kuyper delivered a so-called Rectorial Oration on the subject of "Modern Biblical Criticism". Presently Dr. J. J. Van Oosterzee attacked him on the subject, arguing against the strict Reformed conception of Inspiration very much as our Modernists do to-day. In his reply Kuyper pointed out that the certainty of faith

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in Scripture does not depend upon proof through the reason, but that it rests like all our primordial notions on a ground of its own. He then says: "However, this does not compel us to dispense with the study of theology and to treat it in a scientific way. Indeed, on theological science rests the task of investigating this mighty wonder-work of Scripture. Never can I nor shall I join in with those who consider critical-historical investigation as superfluous, and who would simply ignore its questions. That is the hyper-spirituality of the lazy and a confession of weakness; this needs to be rebuked and discountenanced. We do not believe, however, that every preacher should enter in upon those difficult questions. The senseless method of teaching a minister of the Gospel almost nothing concerning the practical things of the ministry, and instead, pumping his head full of the E² and PJ and C and Dt. of the Pentateuch after the theory of Graf, Kayser, Wellhausen and Reuss condemns itself. But theology as such, in the circle of its specialists, may well feel ashamed of the fact that unbelievers have taken the lead in the investigation of this holy mystery, and that their exertion to break the Scriptures has proved to be a mightier incentive towards this branch of learning than *our* sacred interest in this precious work of God. In the controverted oration I took strong ground. I designed it to be a goad which would court resistance. But whoever imagined that in it I brushed aside all historical-critical study of the Old and New Testaments, is greatly mistaken. On the contrary, if matters work out as I would like, then men of ability and good judgment will be graduated from our University who will make a deep study of these questions.

"In the controverted oration four lines were run along which Reformed theology can eventually make its way:

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"1. The original writers of the Scriptures were instruments of the Holy Spirit not in the sense as if only the ear and the fingers performed service, but they were instruments with their entire personality, including everything that belongs to their surroundings even unto archives. This signifies that their spiritual existence, their thinking, their memory, their conceptions of fact, their kind of composition and their style, their native gifts, their knowledge of things about them, the traditions which had come unto them, yea, even books and documents, — all these belong to that full periphery of their person which, with their person as the instrument, was at the disposal of the Holy Spirit. This is no departure from Reformed theology. Our citation from the "Synopsis" proves the contrary. However, it gives to a current theological process an additional development and explains much that hitherto had remained obscure.

"2. Do not confine the work of God the Holy Spirit to the original documentation of any writing, but also have an ear and an eye for the work of the Holy Spirit in the further recasting and elaboration which such a writing underwent before it definitely entered the Canon. Even as God is the creator of the original earth, but also the fashioning of the later redactions, so to speak, of our tellurian affairs, even thus a difference must be made in regard to the original documentation and the later shaping thereof by redactors. This too is no departure from old Reformed theology as you will find e.g. in Revetus. But it is a further and new development which promises more certainty and more freedom; and it prepares us to receive much more that has been discovered in the last fifty years in regard to the Scriptures.

"3. Thirdly, we referred to the development of

psychology, and we noted in what manner a correct knowledge of the psychological interaction of the one upon the other as occurs in speaking may shed new light upon God's speaking to His prophets.

"4. And in the fourth place we ventured to make an attempt how to differentiate between the healthy and the unhealthy motives in the historico-critical treatment of the Scriptures so that the line of demarcation between them may be properly respected. Two kinds of sin obtain in the hearts of the learned as well as in others, sin in an *ethical* and sin in an *intellectual* sense: both have their root in unbelief. In the ethical sense the man of learning sins who comes short in the delicate ethical feeling of keeping far away from God's Holy Scripture all appearance even of falsehood and pious fraud. Whoever, for instance, comes to confide to us that Daniel indeed belongs to the Bible, but that it is a false book written at a later date, that is, after the events had transpired, and then given under the form of a prophecy, therewith comes to stand outside of that which is holy. Likewise, whoever is influenced by pantheistic theories of thought and would figure away the facts which in Scripture are stated as the great facts which dominate the lives of men, he too falls outside the sphere of Christian theology. A representation as if Gen. 1:1-3 were a myth is consequently condemned as contrary to that which is holy" (*De Heraut*, No. 234).

As giving his fully matured judgment, Kuyper in his *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology* declares that "both Church and individual believer may regard as a failure any canonical inquiry which introduces a pious fraud or a falsehood into it"; but he also declares that it is "just as impermissible to deny the right of a historico-critical

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investigation after the origin, the composition and later redactions of the writings of the Bible, just because the results of such investigation may not accord with certain traditional beliefs." He goes on:

"Armed with their distinction between the *auctor primarius* and *secundarius*, particularly the Reformed theologians have always conceded the possibility of the composition of the Bible-books by parts and their revision through another editor; and, provided all the labor bestowed upon the composition of such a writing, including the later redactions, were but placed under the operation of the *inspiratio scripturaria*, such a representation can never come in conflict with the testimony of the Holy Spirit. In the theory that the Pentateuch consists of different parts, which again in part rest upon other documents, older, and which are lost; that this collection was completed in course of time; and that the final redaction through which the whole was cast into its present form, and that this occurred in later time, in this there lies nothing which need offend us, provided the reality of what is thus communicated to us remain guaranteed through the *inspiratio scripturaria*. That Moses himself with his own hand wrote the *entire* Pentateuch as we now have it, is nowhere taught us in Scripture, and is least of all to be assumed from the title "Moses and the Prophets" (Luke 16:31). With this title and with such expressions as in John 1:46 we come into conflict if it be disputed that *the material* for the Pentateuch should not be derived from Moses, and that not Moses also himself left behind a most important literary legacy, but this conflict does not obtain if you come to the conclusion that the material thus furnished and the documents from the hand of Moses were in later times put together and that this whole underwent still

further revision under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as well as the other. Even the hypothesis that Deuteronomy was written in its present form in later times does not collide with the 'Testimonium Spiritus Sancti' if only this remain established that the sources after which it is edited were reliable and that the editing itself proceeded under the "leading into all truth". The Church of Christ is concerned with the final result, not with any method of elaboration of these writings. The less mechanically and the more naturally this moulding took place, the better. From the nature of the case the 'Testimonium Spiritus Sancti' cannot postulate any detailed requirement, it can never validate any other than a *spiritual* requirement, and this requirement is positive in character, in that it speaks to us with Divine authority in that which Scripture as a whole presents to us, and it is negative in character in that we are not *belied* by the Holy Spirit.

"And indeed it is just the latter situation which at present under various palliative forms is being received in growing measure as the result of historico-critical studies. God has *not* truly spoken to Moses as is claimed; Moses has *not* given this revelation to Israel in the current form; in what is told us there may lie concealed a *germ* of historical truth, but as we have the account before us, it must be the *drapery* of some reality. To conclude, hardly one fact remains standing on a firm basis, and not one truth which, apart from our approval, will be honored by us as authentic. Of the facts, then, nothing may remain but those which can be explained in a natural way, and is devoid of interest because of its commonness, while, on the other hand, only that is admitted which enters our own range of thought, not because its Divine authority impresses us, but because we regard it as being in agreement with what would

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appear true to us even without Scripture. In this way all Divine authority is gone: on not a single point can mention of certainty be made" (Encyc. III. 51-54).

This again points in the same direction that in dealing with Divine things we may not apply human measurements. From the nature of the case everything human must be absolutely subordinate and dependent. This is a necessary corollary of the Reformed principle of authority.

And hence Scripture may not be placed on one line with any other literature. Sacred literature is absolutely unique in its kind. On this point again we are happy to quote from Kuyper's Encyclopedia:

"The predicate *Holy* before Scripture becomes in its application to the individual books the predicate of *Canonical*. As Scripture lies before you and as it is subjectively accepted by theologians, it makes itself an exception; it affirms to be what no other book or collection of writings is; and it lays claim to the exercise of a certain authority. If now science proceeds to examine this *Biblia*, it is this exceptional, this characteristic attribute, this high pretension which is the chief thing to which this investigation is to devote itself and all other investigations have to adjust themselves around this one chief point. The study of theology has a starting-point of its own. It lies in the fact that both by means of the history of the Church and through the 'Testimonium Spiritus Sancti' in an individual sense a certain bond has come about between Scripture and the investigator, a bond which in Scripture itself is characterized as a "trembling at the Word of God." This mystical fact may not for a moment be left out of account. Whoever disregards it tears Scripture out of its living connection, and retains but an abstraction.

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It is precisely this mystical element on which these studies must shed their light, and which they may not ignore nor remove, but which they must explain. The object of these studies can never be to determine for you or for the Church what Scripture shall be. For every heart and for the Church Scripture is what she is not as a result of study but as the result of historical and spiritual-mystical factors. The Christian lives by the Scriptures and continues to do this undisturbed; and alongside of this those studies which investigate this "living by Scripture" pursue their course, not in order that the Christian may from time to time change his spiritual living according to the changing results of these studies of Scripture, but in order that these studies shall not rest till they have succeeded to sufficiently explain tranquil, unaltered life. We quietly breathe on, altogether without regard to the studies which the physiologist is instituting concerning respiration; and life remains intact hardly concerned as to what the man of science may bring to light on the nature of life. However, no one will gainsay that physiological and biological studies are valuable for hygiene, but these studies do not originate and justify respiration and life as such. In the same way canonical studies undoubtedly can give a purer direction to our "living by the Scriptures", if only this "living by the Scriptures", in its historico-mystical sense, retain its fundamental significance" (III. 25, 26).

CHAPTER VII

THE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION

It must have become evident that a correct doctrine of inspiration is of great importance. The doctrine must be of such a nature as to reckon with all the facts involved. Particularly, it must face the vexed question of Errancy or Inerrancy. Furthermore, various theories of inspiration have been offered: these need to be carefully examined. Some of these may sound very acceptable, but may be deceptive in their value: sometimes a plausible name may be deftly shuffled off for what is really another matter.

We cannot of course enter into everything, and must confine ourselves to our main purpose, and examine all that has bearing in this connection upon the principal matter in hand.

In our day the storm-center seems to be largely the question as to whether inspiration is of a so-called "static" or "dynamic" kind. Liberals affix the former designation to the theory of the orthodox, and they themselves glory in the latter name. They just love to use that word "static" as if its mere application will at once and infallibly act as a withering blight on all orthodox pretension. They are very welcome to the use of the word "dynamic" for themselves, but we indignantly disown their characterization of *our* position.

"Static" is a word which applies to something mechanical, unchangeable. Besides, there is an equivocal element in the designation. Conceivably you may call the Divine

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Being "static" if you think of Him as unchangeable and as that one "with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (James 1:17). However, from another point of view, we must consider Him in the light of Jesus' saying: "My Father worketh even until now, and I work" (John 6:17). The older theologians very correctly and beautifully spoke of God as "*actus purissimus*". In like manner we Reformed do not acknowledge the correctness of the designation "static" as applicable to our view of Inspiration, for is not the "word of God living, and active"? (Heb. 4:12). Besides, the composition of the Bible, as our quotations above show, was not mechanical but allowed of all manner of diversity of style and recognized human initiative. Neither do we acknowledge the contents of our theology as being "static". For while great principles have been found which steadily refuse to capitulate to others; and while the great dogmas have gained a pretty well settled form, nevertheless there will always remain room for further detail, for a more extensive tracing of their correlations amongst themselves and their relations to the endlessly diversified realities of life: this is not "static". The truth as it exists in the Divine mind is the most absolutely static of all, whilst at the same time it makes Him most Self-sufficient rejoicing in Himself and in all His works.

But is the Liberal as well off as he thinks when he stands by the characterization of his view of Inspiration as being "dynamic"? It *sounds* well. It looks as if it fits the word of Scripture: "*moved* by the Holy Spirit". But what does *he* make of this text? Not what we do.

The same question came to the fore in the controversy in which Dr. J. J. Van Oosterzee, of the theological faculty of the University of Utrecht, attacked Dr. A.

Kuyper on account of his Rectorial Oration on "Higher Criticism", to which we have already adverted above. This was in 1882. And Dr. Kuyper replied in part as follows:

"Dr. Van Oosterzee makes it appear as if on our part a certain *mechanical* theory of Inspiration were defended, over against which he then places his own as the *dynamic* theory. We protest as well against the distinctions between the two as against the qualification. Every mechanical idea of inspiration we reject, detest and abhor. "Mechanical" is the word which serves to indicate that which is low, ignoble. To apply this to the work of the Lord God would be degradation to the most glorious working of the power of God, ascribing unto Him what is unworthy even with man, and thus to make of the deep mystery of Scripture a representation as if it had come about through magic or mechanics.

"Never did even our fathers adhere to such a view; and we protest all the stronger because this is one of those ugly terms with which our opponents dub us. That word "mechanical" is a term of reproach with which highly pretentious circles in Germany sought to undermine the authority of the Scriptures.

"Over against the machine whose parts man puts together, stands the organism which is God's creation. Therefore we may never think of Scripture other than as an organism. And since the Lord God is not a man who stands antithetically over against the instrument of His revelation, but is an omnipresent, immanent God who upholds His creature, and in whom he lives and moves and has his being, therefore the operation of God in and upon the instrument of His revelation may never be thought of other than as organic.

"The antithesis made by Dr. Van Oosterzee does not

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apply. Any one can see that over against a machine does not stand power, but over against that which has been put together and manufactured stands that which is constituted by natural process, created from a germ. Over against the mechanical therefore stands only the organic.

"The word "dynamic" has come from an entirely different quarter: it is of pantheistic origin. It owes its origin to quite a different antinomy than the mechanical as over against the organic.

"From of old it was held on Scriptural grounds that in God's works the word was first, and afterwards and out of the word was life. But the Ethical School inverts this; not only that in theology does this, but also that widely extended ethical tendency which as a philosophical school and as a philosophical power has permeated all lands and every domain of thought, and of which the Ethical School in theology is only one of its tempered expressions. This School then declares that instead of the word being first it shall henceforth be life first and out of that the word. This accounts for the fact that you find among these people such aversion to exactitude of definition, accuracy of ideas, firmness of principle; and alongside of this you will always find a retreating to the faith of the heart, to the mysticism of the soul, to the hidden life, to the influence of personality, to the atmosphere which surrounds one, and finally even to the unconscious. All the struggle against the Confessions, against dogmatics, against a definite church polity proceeds from that same source, out of that fatal fountain of pantheism which accepting a process in God and so doing away with the living, personal God, allows the deepest, richest revelations of life to come forth from the soul of man, slowly on of course, and tends to expression.

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Among these people the term "dynamic" is at home. They mean by it that from God influences only proceed, indefinite, unconscious.

"When this view is held among Christians they represent things on this fashion: God causes influences and powers to flow into the one and not into the other; these may be increased; these may be set in motion. But that is all that God does. Thoughts, expectations, impulses, etc. proceed spontaneously: all is a process in man which goes on as naturally as the rising of vapor from a steam boiler, etc.

"It is natural therefore that theologians in Germany, who hold this view, correctly located Verbal or conscious Inspiration over against the Dynamic or unconscious. This indicates with incontrovertible accuracy all the breadth of the chasm which yawns between the Word of Scripture and this philosophical school.

"Gods revelation never was made mechanically, but always organically. Even in His giving of the Law written with His own finger on tables of stone we really have to do with the creative work of God's omnipresent power" (*De Heraut*, No. 230).

Having treated the term "dynamic" as applied to Inspiration, we shall now treat of two other terms both of which belong to the orthodox camp, viz., Plenary and Verbal Inspiration. The former term applies to the completeness of extent, and the latter to the particularity of intent. Against the former perhaps little objection has been raised on general lines; but the latter term has met with strong opposition. Briggs in his "The Bible, the Church, and the Reason" directs the strongest kind of artillery-fire against this view; he points out numerous cases of error in the Scripture; he cites even Calvin and other orthodox writers as admitting such errors. Like-

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wise Dr. John DeWitt in his "What is Inspiration?" did the very same thing, arguing in favor of Errancy and against what is called Verbal Inspiration. And the orthodox in America have labored hard to defend Verbal Inspiration and Inerrancy; and without being able to make headway against the opposition.

In view of the fact that such theologians as Kuyper and Bavinck of The Netherlands, have occupied the strongest kind of ground on the absolute authority of Scripture, accepting the Scripture in its entirety as the Word of God, holding that it not merely *contains* the Word of God but that it in its entirety *is* the Word of God, nevertheless it will almost shock many to hear that they do not precisely stand for so-called Verbal Inspiration, but they designate their theory as Organic Inspiration, a form in which they trouble themselves little with the ideas of Errancy or Inerrancy.

We can best give an account of the matter by quoting from the Dogmatic Theology of Prof. Dr. Herman Bavinck, late of the Free University of Amsterdam, a man of wide learning, and great ability, and among the Reformed circles in The Netherlands a theologian of the highest authority, and advocating in the matter of Inspiration the same view as Dr. Kuyper:

"Holy Scripture nowhere furnishes a clearly formulated dogma of inspiration, but it gives the material in all its elements which are necessary for the construction of the doctrine. It teaches the inspiration of Scripture in the same sense and in the same manner as clearly and plain, but also formulated it in abstract generalizations just as little as the dogma of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, of the Atonement, etc. Inspiration is a fact taught by Scripture itself. Jesus and the Apostles gave witness to it. It speaks of itself as such. Does this deserve to be

respected? Whoever makes his doctrine of the Scripture dependent upon historical investigation after its origin and structure, begins already to reject the witness of Scripture itself, and hence does not stand in the faith. The facts and phenomena of Scripture, the results of scientific investigation, may serve to throw some light upon the doctrine of the Scripture concerning herself, but they can never nullify the facts as such. While then one party affirms that only such an inspiration is acceptable as agrees with the phenomena of Scripture, the other party proceeds from the principle that the phenomena of Scripture are consistent with the self-witness of Scripture, not as Criticism views them, but as they are as a matter of fact. (I. 339-342).

"Scripture sets the pace in regarding the speaking of God through the prophets as organically as possible. There is a difference between the prophets and the apostles, and again between these amongst themselves. Moses stands at the head of the prophets: God spake with him as a friend with a friend. In the case of Isaiah the impulse of the Spirit exhibits a different character than in the case of Ezechiel; Jeremiah's prophecies are distinguished from those of Zachariah and Daniel for their simplicity and naturalness. In all the prophets of the Old Testament the impulse of the Spirit is more or less transcendent: it comes from above and falls upon them. In the case of the apostles the Holy Spirit dwells immanent in their hearts, leads, enlightens and teaches them. There obtains therefore a great difference also in this organic character of Inspiration. All Scripture obliges us not to think of its inspiration as being mechanical, but organic. In His revelation and inspiration the Spirit shows condescension, and He has adjusted Himself to the peculiarities, even to the weaknesses of

human nature. Even as the Logos did not fall upon man but entered into human nature and formed it through the Spirit from whom it was received, so the Spirit of the Lord has also acted in Inspiration. He entered into the prophets themselves and has so taken them into His service and moulded them that they themselves investigated, thought, spoke and wrote. It is He that speaks through them, but at the same time they themselves speak and write. The Holy Spirit did not arbitrarily decide to write at one time thus, and at another time, so; but entering the writers he also entered into their style and language—into their characters and peculiarities which He had Himself prepared and formed. Their personal experiences were thus used for the benefit of the church of God (345-349).

“It does not follow that everything is full of divine wisdom, that every jot and tittle has an infinite content. Everything has its meaning, to be sure, but it is in that place and in that connection wherein it occurs. Scripture may not be regarded atomistically as if every word and letter, standing loose by itself and isolated, should as such have been inspired with a meaning of its own, and therefore with divine, infinite content. But Scripture must be taken organically so that that which is least has its place and meaning and still lies much farther from the center than other parts. In the human organism nothing is accidental, neither length of person, color or tint; all stand related to the life-center. Head and heart occupy a much more important place than hand and foot, than nails and hair (352, 353).

“Furthermore this organic view of Inspiration furnishes us the means of meeting many objections which are brought in against the inspiration of Scripture. It is of great significance that the Holy Spirit did not disdain

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anything human to be the vehicle of the divine. The revelation of God is not abstractly supernatural, but has made use of the human, of persons and circumstances, of forms and usages, of history and customs. The personality of the writers has not been superseded, but has been maintained and sanctified. Inspiration therefore in no wise requires that we place the literary style and the esthetic taste of an Amos on an equal footing with Isaiah. Secondly, the organic view of revelation and inspiration implies that common and natural life has not been excluded, but has been made subservient to the thought of God. Sin in the best of its saints is mentioned, and error is never condoned. And while the revelation of God in Christ thus taken up in itself unrighteousness as an antithesis, it does not despise the human and weak. That which is Christian does not stand antithetically over against the human: it is the restoration and renewal thereof.

“Thirdly, the object and end of Scripture are closely connected with its contents. It serves to make us wise unto salvation. Holy Scripture has an exclusively religious-ethical end in view. It is not a book of science. It has the specific characteristic of being the principium of theology, whence we must read and investigate its contents *theologically*. In all the branches of study which are grouped about Scripture, the saving knowledge of God must determine these studies. For that purpose Scripture furnishes the full data. In that sense it is perfect and complete. Whoever would construct from Scripture a history of Israel, a biography of Jesus, a history of Israelitish or Old-Christian literature will find himself disappointed. Historical Criticism has forgotten this. Therefore it runs up against contradictions which cannot be solved; it assorts sources and documents with-

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out end, etc., with the result of accentuating the confusion. Out of the four Gospels no Life of Jesus can be constructed; out of the Old Testament, no history of Israel. This was not the object of Holy Scripture. Inspiration does not exhibit the precise recording of the notary public. The harmonizing of the Gospels has been a failure" (358-360).

"This determines the relation between Scripture and Science. As the book of the knowledge of God Scripture has indeed much to say also to the other sciences. Much of what is mentioned in Scripture is of fundamental signification for various sciences as well. Creation and the fall of man, the unity of the human race, the deluge, the origin of the nations, and languages, etc., are all facts of great importance for scientific research. Science and art constantly come in contact with Scripture since the principia for all life are given in Scripture. But all these facts are not given in Scripture on their own account but for a theological purpose. And furthermore, Scripture describes scientific matters not in the exact language of the schools but after the first impressions which phenomena make upon man. Hence it speaks of the earth as the center of the universe, and it uses the language of daily experience. Had it used the language of the learned and spoken scientifically exact, it would have stood in the way of its own authority" (360-363).

To resume. The doctrine of inspiration amounts to very little on the Liberal interpretation, which appears more or less correct for all forms, we presume, in the following definition of Charles W. Gilkey: "What then is inspiration? The power of all great utterance of spiritual experience to move upon and call forth kindred response in the souls of men." We ask, Whence this

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spiritual experience? Its origin is not stated, but all their literature gives the impression that it is really of human origin as it is the "best that is in man."

The orthodox believe in the Divine Being as a Living personality who regards His creatures and is able to communicate with them. As to His method no one can help but feel that deep mystery resides in the manner thereof. But such mystery applies to so many other doctrines of Scripture. The separate elements which enter into them may to a very high degree admit of construction and comprehension, but we get into profound difficulty when the interrelations are to be pointed out. Our definitions may proceed in the right direction, but cannot be completed. This will appear on considering such doctrines as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement; it troubles us in harmonizing free-will and human responsibility and we find it in seeking to harmonize the divine and the human factor in the doctrine of Inspiration. The Modernist with his naturalistic basis may solve all problems easily and crow over it, not being aware how superficial he is, but he simply ignores the Divine. The Reformed have truly grappled with the problems; they have recognized both elements to the full extent and have heroically proceeded to bring about a measurable solution withal confessing that depths beyond have halted their power of comprehension.

"The trouble with us is that we endeavor to explain what ought to be adored as a mystery. You ridicule the mechanical theory of inspiration, but what do you say about the others, which are advanced and defended from time to time? Do they explain the unsearchable agency of the Holy Spirit in the inspiration of the Scripture? I must honestly say that there is no theory which satisfies me. But have I now to give up the fact of inspiration

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because all the theories fail to explain it? Who desires to sit in darkness because he is unable to explain the nature and origin of the light? Instead of throwing away our treasure and the assurance of its reality, on account of the mystery connected with it, let us try to become more and more acquainted with its rich contents Do we indulge in Bibliolatry? By no means. We worship our Father in Heaven in Jesus Christ His Son; but it is the Holy Spirit who directs our eyes to the wonderful picture of God in Christ we find in the Bible The Holy Scriptures are entirely human and at the same time entirely Divine. Do you comprehend this? I do not, but I believe in the mystery of Inspiration" (Prof. N. M. Steffens, D.D.).

In his "Dictaten Dogmatiek" Dr. Kuyper brings this out in a striking fashion: "Scripture contains a divine and a human factor. This too was the case in the Son of God. Try it out and say: Christ was God in the flesh, but that flesh did not properly belong to the Mediator; separate the two, then you will have to do either of two: to follow the method of Docetism and declare the external form of Jesus negligible; or you must say the Divine was nothing except a human life endowed with high potencies. Suppose that a physician had gone to the Savior and had asked for permission to examine his flesh and blood in order to discover the divine in him. Everybody would have called this absurd. But it is just as absurd for the critic to dissect Scripture, human as its form appears to us, to lay bare the divine. As in an organism, the scalpel of the anatomist cannot indicate the beginning or the location of life."

In that wonderful and beautiful Section 46 of his Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology Dr. Kuyper thus puts the same matter: "Even as in the Mediator the Divine

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nature was wedded to the human and comes before us in the form and fashion of the latter, thus also the Divine factor in Scripture clothes itself in the garment of our human forms of thought. As a literary product Holy Scripture takes the form of a servant. This confuses the vision. As many a painting of the French School at first shows only daubs and blotches, you must take time to find the right position for beholding its beauties. Even so with the Savior. How many have not been able to see Him! Only then when one stands in the right position, and himself received the light in his spiritual eye, can he see the Divine nature shine forth from the Rabbi of Nazareth. Do not promise yourself the coming of faith from an examination of the external beauties of Scripture. This will rather be a hindrance to faith. Whatever else you may see, you will have to see the *unity of conception* in order to make Holy Scripture to you a Divine reality."

Since the Liberal places his main reliance for a lax view of Inspiration upon the Errancy of Scripture it becomes very important resolutely to face the matter and to examine in how far he may be right; and if so, in a small degree, how he is to be met and still keep the Reformed principle of authority inviolate. Again we cannot do better than to listen to the voice of one whose sound and sane judgment must readily commend itself:

"The Church has never meant to raise to the dignity of a dogma the *manner of the origination* of the Scriptures. The Church *confesses*; and her confession can therefore extend no further than to the *character* of inspiration in connection with its *result*. How Scripture came into being, and how its different layers were formed, does not concern the believer as such, and is to a large extent a matter of indifference to the Church. The only

matter upon which she insists and for which she contends is that the divine authority, the infallibility, the absolute guarantee, the certainty stand unshaken. The Church *confesses*; that is, she declares that she *possesses*; that she *knows*, that she must *witness*. Her first need therefore is rocklike, immovable certainty. A certainty for which her martyrs are willing to die. And that certainty can therefore be none other than such as carries an immediate *Divine* guarantee.

"Hence, as a believer one cannot with full confidence go along with such as to-day cry out from every direction: "If only I possess Christ, I have the fulfilment of all my needs!" For, however much of truth there may be in this matter as such, it is, as a ground of certainty, like a cork floating upon the water. For where do you find your Christ? How do you know about him? How will you distinguish between a *true* and a *false* conception of your Savior? Is it not true that this can be done *through the Scriptures*, and through them alone?

"I cannot obtain divine certainty than by means of a two-fold work of God the Holy Spirit: 1. that God the Holy Spirit absolutely guarantee the truth of the contents of Scripture; 2. that God the Holy Spirit, aside from all criticism and literary investigation, in an immediate manner work in my heart that assurance that Scripture possesses this divine authority. My own certainty, as a man of learning, must be no better nor other than that of the plainest rustic. Otherwise it would not be religious in its nature. And since a plain child of God knows nothing about Manuscripts, or variants, or interpolations, therefore the certainty which everybody needs to be assured of as before God for his eternal welfare, must rest upon an authority which has nothing to do with all this erudition; and as it obtains altogether outside of the

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universities it must be instilled in my consciousness by an immediate work of God the Holy Spirit. This is the Testimonium Spiritus Sancti of the Reformation. It is the only certainty which I declare I know. And all ministers who attempt to do something else in order to awaken this testimony of the Holy Spirit, may be smart Christian rabbis, but they are not glad witnesses for a divine assurance with which the Merciful One comforts our souls" (Kuyper, *De Heraut*).

But how shall discrepancies be met to justify such confidence? Dr. Kuyper thus answers a correspondent:

"Having been asked how we explain the troublesome fact that the Law of the Ten Commandments which in Ex. XX is recorded as having been directly given from God Himself, can appear once more in Deut. V with considerable variation of wording.

"We shall show that only on our standpoint and with the acceptance of an absolute inspiration this objection loses its pertinence. The objection would have weight if you proceed from a narrow, slavishly literal construction of things which has nothing in common with the free and glorious ways of God in his work of inspiration. Of course if you think of the Holy Spirit as a rabbinical precisionist, who produces document after document out of his case of rolls, and then copies with anxious accuracy, you will fare badly with your Scripture. But such a position we reject most emphatically. In the Scriptures you do not hear a rabbinist speaking, who counts every tittle and scrutinizes every jot; and you are also in error if you think you will find some candidates for the notaryship busy at work correcting mistakes in the minutes. Every such conception is without sense and ignores the mighty, personal, dominating work of the Holy Spirit, and it comes into its own when you take careful note

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of the fact that the same Divine consciousness out of which the Ten Commandments proceeded at Horeb is also the Divine consciousness through which Moses spake at Nebo; and furthermore, it is the same Divine consciousness through whose direction the documentation was controlled of what we read in Ex. XX and Deut. V. Now I ask you whether the author of a document is not perfectly in his right to repeat his own thoughts in another form? Since human language is too imperfect to reflect the fulness of the Divine mind, would you bind the Lord God to a form which would limit His sovereignty? And if this variation in form of expression had had no other object than to prevent deification of the letter, would not that have been a sufficient reason for God's high purpose?

"These two redactions of the Law afford us no trouble, but it must rather disconcert our opponents. Judged by their view these variations must stand to the account of fallible human beings, and therefore you can never tell what Gods commandments really are. These fallible redactors can have been mistaken in anything, and with this all religious certainty is at an end. On the other hand, we on our premises and by reason of our glorious and blessed confession of an absolute inspiration, we have no difficulty, and we discover that through these differences of reading our treasure has even been enriched. For to us it is God the Holy Spirit who guarantees us with absolute certainty that we, reading in Ex. XX, have, I do not say a diplomatically exact copy, but a guaranteed reproduction of what in actutl fact and to all intents and purposes had been heard on Mt. Sinai. And then, on coming to Deut. V, we once more find the same God, the Holy Spirit who with the same absolute certainty guarantees us that the reproduction of the Law

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recorded there holds good and furnishes us the Law of God without need of our being disconcerted about the form.

"The same applies to citations from the Old Testament which the Divine Author may vary as He pleases, they being His own; this also applies to differences between the Synoptic Gospels; etc.

"Attempt the solution of Gen. 11:26, 32; 12:4 with Acts 7:4. If you do not succeed, do not become discouraged. Inspiration does not require that Stephen narrated everything in accordance with the exact facts of history, but only that the discourse of Stephen has been truly recorded" (Dict. Dogm. S. S. II. 216).

"If you dispense with the absolute inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, all these discrepancies which may be harmonistically pottered away, will rise up before you mountain high as stumbling-blocks, as rocks upon which your faith in the Scriptures is in danger of shipwreck.

"On the other hand, if you accept this absolute inspiration with holy ecstasy, you will be, thank God, done with all these makeshift activities; you will be as free as a fish in the water, and without needing to cover or disguise anything, you will rest in the absolute guarantee vouchsafed by the Holy Spirit that every deviation leaves the matter inviolate and with Divine assurance brings it to your soul with added clearness" (*De Heraut*, No. 229).

While, then, the presence of anything in Scripture is under direct knowledge and supervision of the Holy Spirit who is the Architect of the whole, there are degrees of intensity of application of this superintendence, as there are such degrees of vigilance in an architect in the building for which he is responsible. In "moving the holy men of old" the Holy Spirit must necessarily have

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done this in an absolute manner (though in a way inscrutable to us) in such cases as in Gen. I and in the prophecies. In narrating simple historical fact, and in copying lists of names from documents at hand, this superintendence was at a minimum. As to matters of indifferent consequence this was left to the natural impression of the writer about which the Holy Spirit did not trouble Himself. A case in point is, as to whether one or two blind men cried out to our Lord near Jericho: "Thou son of David, have mercy on us!" The accounts give several variations; but Organic Inspiration does not require notarial exactness of all the details, but the truth of life, and it guarantees the account. We may therefore be certain that wherever much depends on the language, there the guarantee reaches to every required detail.

As we have already intimated, our orthodox Presbyterian brethren have strongly insisted upon the Inerrancy of Scripture, but probably they also, when certain difficulties are brought to their attention, will acknowledge something of what the Liberal chooses to call Errancy, and to really explain the difficulty the Organic theory of Inspiration will offer the best solution. A case in point is the remark of Dr. C. E. Macartney: "By the inerrancy of the Scriptures is not meant that there can be no discrepancy between the numerals in Kings and Chronicles, of that (although the subject is still discussed by scholars) in the passage where reference is made in Matthew's gospel to what was done with the thirty pieces of silver, the supposed prophecy could not have been referred to Jeremiah instead of Zachariah where it seems properly to belong. That is not what we mean when we speak of the inerrancy of the Scriptures. We mean, for example, that when the gospels tell us that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born

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of the virgin Mary, that he died a sin-offering, that he rose from the grave with the marks of his passion in his body, and that he walked on the sea and stilled the tempest, and fed a multitude of people with a few loaves and fishes, they are telling us what is fact. In this true and proper sense, the inerrancy of the Scriptures is plainly declared, both in the Confession and in the Brief Statement" (*The Presbyterian*, Dec. 20, 1923, pp. 7, 8).

To conclude. We may list the matters which have caused difficulty in accepting the truth and correctness of the accounts in Scripture as follows:

1. Questions of so-called Lower Criticism. These concern the text as such, and bring to light evident errors of copyists; etc. Hardly any difficulty is any more felt in any quarter on this point.

2. Statements which reflect the impressions of ordinary experience; as, the rising of the sun; the earth as the center of the universe; etc.

3. Seeming contradictions; such as, "God is not man that He should repent" as against: "And it repented the Lord." An honest exegesis will easily take care of this, as it takes into account the absolute Divine standpoint as against impressions from the human side.

4. Difficulty as to the accuracy of historical fact; as, the "census that was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria"; so many unexpected archeological discoveries have been made that it is wise to hold every such question in abeyance if there is any real difficulty at present.

5. Quotations from the Septuagint at variance with the original Hebrew text. It must be evident that the Holy Spirit has the right to quote Himself even to the extent of adding another meaning.

6. Actual discrepancies such as we find in the parallel

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accounts of the Gospels. The Holy Spirit does not anxiously descend to the mechanical level of infinite precision; He does not parade Himself to our view.

7. The difficulties involved in the construction of doctrine. Scripture as the wonder-work of Divine wisdom is not given us in a cut-and-dried fashion, on the level of the child-mind, but in such a manner as to tax the best efforts of man in order that he may trace out and assimilate the marvelous wisdom of God. This makes so-called Dogmatic Theology a study which requires the ripest mental powers and a comprehensive vision of the general field, guided by assured principles and carefully ascertained results of exegesis. Our present times of speed and superficiality in which the newspaper reporter speaks as confidently of theological questions as the professor of theology, is not favorable to this branch of learning, and we are constantly treated to hearing most bizarre attempts, as, e.g., a defense of the idea that "God grows"!

CHAPTER VIII

CREEDS AND STANDARDS: THEIR SIGNIFICANCE AND FUNCTIONS

A Creed is a formal summary of fundamental points of religious belief, setting forth in an authoritative way on the part of a Church its views of faith and practice. Summaries of this kind are also called 'Standards'. The definition of this word contributes towards the understanding of its nature, functions and values. The Standard Dictionary thus defines the word: "A standard is a flag, ensign, or banner, considered as a distinctive emblem of a government, body of men, or special cause or movement. Hence, any type, model, example, or authority with which comparison may be made; any fact, thing, or circumstance forming the basis for adjustment and regulation; a criterion of excellence; test." This word 'standard' therefore as applied to the formulary of a Church has this function, that, having been established on behalf of and with the consent of the membership, it conveys a concise construction of the Christian faith. As such it is an official document with which comparison may be made in order the more readily to determine the correctness of what is to be held in such a Church as their view of the general and fundamental content of Scripture. Agreement with such a standard determines the right of any one being a proper adherent of such a communion.

Along with Dogmatic Theology few good words are

spoken these days in favor of Creeds and Standards. In a rather supercilious way they are sometimes represented as being "mummeries", mere formalities which are being "mouthed". They have been called "canned goods". It has been affirmed that our "thinking youth" admit an inability of "getting behind the words of the Creeds"; and this inability may also be applied to a large number of older folks.

We want to ask, How is it possible that it should be such an objectionable matter to have Creeds and Standards? Do not all schools of thought and various associations of men have to some degree these more or less definite formularies which serve to inform those who belong to them, and others, as to their exact character? A political party has its platform; a school of medicine has certain ideas in regard to disease and its cure; whatever systems of philosophy there have ever been, set forth their own distinctive principles.

What necessity has led to the formulation of Creeds? Simply this: the exceeding riches, the wide compass, and the depth of significance of the wisdom of God with which the finite mind of man has ever struggled to comprehend and assimilate it. The brightest minds and the choicest spirits have found their most exalted occupations in seeking to fathom the profound ways and thoughts of God. They have not fully agreed. Different types of belief have arisen; as, Greek and Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, Lutheran and Reformed Protestantism and their numerous subsidiary forms characterizing the Baptist, the Methodist, the Unitarian, the Adventist, etc. All these are so specific in their general type of thought and practise that they must live in separate organization in order harmoniously to carry out their views. And these beliefs and practices are known

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by their Creeds—the definite setting forth of their particular beliefs.

Can this Creed formation be dispensed with in our present state of existence? Is it superfluous? Must the Church be a heterogeneous jumble of all kinds of individual beliefs getting along with each other as best they can? In other spheres of thought it is a mark of quality to have definition and precision: must this be an exception in religion? How extremely particular our lawmakers are in the phraseology of their statutes. What scrupulous care the legal profession exercises in the delivery of opinions. How marvelously exact the language of the decisions of the Supreme Court! Why should expression be denied to the great basic principles on which an entire structure of doctrine rests, the things pertaining to the revelation of the All-wise God and for the tremendous eternal concerns of man?

The idea that in dispensing with Creeds churches are after all better off, is a delusion and a snare. Thinking people have certain general, well-defined ideas in regard to what they view as constituting the teaching of the Bible, and these can most harmoniously be practiced in separate households of faith. Even the Baptist in his determination to do without a Creed has at least the unwritten belief in adult baptism, immersion as the only correct mode, and other matters. They even have their individual churches which more or less definitely range themselves on orthodox or modernistic lines. They stand upon some basis which though not authoritatively promulgated, is practically a standing upon a creed. More than people are aware of or want to own, they have their private range of beliefs, couched in a more or less logical system which they have gained from their previous education. To all intents and purposes these are their

standards by which they measure the quality and correctness of the beliefs of others, even though they are unwritten.

However, these considerations do not fully account for the general aversion to Creeds. There is something more vital at the bottom of it.

First of all, we shall refer to ignorance of Scripture and indolence in acquiring its facts and contents as playing a great role. When it is affirmed that our young people are not interested and that they cannot get behind the expressions of the Creeds, it is largely an indication of ignorance which is aided by the natural bent of the sinful heart to entertain an aversion to the things of the Spirit of God. No one needs to say that the language and the ideas of the Creed are so incomprehensible to the alert youth of our land, least of all to those who in our schools grapple with the problems of mathematics and the abstruse ideas of philosophy. Intelligent study of the Scriptures cannot avoid the necessity of coming to some comprehensive construction of the material. A question like that pertaining to the Deity of Christ must be faced, *nolens volens*, and in connection with it his nature and origin. And even the ministry is much to blame in living too much on the superficial plane of practical affairs, at home in the realm of shallow thought, interested in sports and the like more than in the mysteries of the Kingdom of God to which their high calling claims the highest if not the chief attention. But even then all ages and conditions of men *will* get their religious ideas. In some unsought way religious problems will force themselves on one's attention. Errorists have a way of charming with specious reasoning and appealing to some hidden natural prejudice and make ardent disciples for their particular cause. Systematic and well-

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advised training has been neglected so long that the balance-wheel of the mind has gone wild, and an arbitrary subjectivism, a disposition to obey every whim of the fancy, has full sway in our times. Thus superficial ideas, whose content and bearing have not been seen, preempt the mind against better things.

A second reason to account for the aversion to Creeds is hostility against the doctrines which are therein set forth. The regular Creeds have been carefully constructed and have brought out the deep things of God in such a pointed manner as to challenge the submission of a self-sufficient reason. The hurry of the times which does not take leisure to stop for quiet consideration has brought a mass of impressions which are immature, distorted, mistaken, and wild of control: they who hold them chafe at the restraints of a well-ordered arrangement. The average thinker of this day is individualistic; he knows it all; he is a law unto himself; even though he professes reverence for the Bible and the Savior. Their objection that the Creeds create formalists is a confusion of reference. Of course we all disapprove of formalism. But the objection in question really has in mind quite a different thing: it is opposed to certain doctrines which these Creeds set before them and which they resent.

Then there is the objection that religion is not merely a system of doctrine but a life, a "spirit, a radiating, saturating influence". This divorces feeling from fact, and makes existence an abstraction. On this principle the emotional pantheist, the contemplative Buddhist meet all the requirements of religion, and the "only Name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved", is a case of extravagant demand. However, religion is a definite relation to the Living God, one who

has revealed Himself definitely in regard to the way in which He demands service. We are to know His character and must worship and serve Him in the way which accords with these requirements. To be safe, we are to proceed on the premises laid down by God Himself. We have the concrete instances of God's working, as it shows forth His grace on the background of history which is thus related to us creatures of time and connected with forms. Even if it should be no more than equivocation, it is damaging to the Christian faith for Canon Simpson to say: "There is no sufficient gospel in the Apostles' Creed to save the proverbial church-mouse. Men and women are never saved by formulae. They are never redeemed by possessing information about God. I have yet to learn that it is the function of a Creed to save souls. We can only believe in persons. We cannot believe in the Bible. We can only believe in God." Such a violent severance of fact and form can only do harm. The Apostles' Creed furnishes us the great facts of the Christian religion, which facts are inextricably connected with the operation of the Holy Spirit for the apprehension of the truth and as He applies the redemption in Christ. The fact of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, e.g., belongs to the indispensable conditions of salvation; to know them and to refer them to the quality of the person and the purpose of their occurrence, — all this and more lies in the way of salvation. We believe in the Bible as we would believe in the voice of God could it be heard addressing us from the sky. Believing the Bible, we believe the words, and we believe the person who is inextricably woven up with His own Word in whatever form it comes to us. According to the Reformed principle of authority the identification of Scripture with the will of God is so complete that we call Scripture

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the principle of authority. Hence it is that the Creed as based upon Scripture is not merely a form, but becomes to the believing heart the very reality. In matters of locomotion the engineer of course may speak of the steam as the power needed, and they may, so to speak, be called the vital element, the parts of the engine being so much metal, still, as the latter holds the steam and directs its power, the entire engine is thought of as a unit, and as such is effective.

As a further example of frightful thoughtlessness and conceit, you can read this in a prominent religious journal which prides itself on its high degree of intelligence and common-sense: "Our young people feel competent to make their own statements of faith." Here is a combination of ignorance and temerity which challenges its equal. How unworthy of intellectual men to make such sweeping off-hand statements. As if the Word of God is such a simple thing and to be mastered on a casual perusal! As to the facility with which a Creed can be constructed the wise and sober words of Prof. D. P. D. Fabius, of the Free University of Amsterdam, are to the point: "The Confession of the Church is a labor of the ages. In the consecutive periods of history all its doctrines have been arrived at as the result of comprehensive, thorough investigation. Indeed, the Church has been obliged to follow up to the very roots all different views. Whence the statement of a doctrine must be the conclusion of a laborious process, even though in a certain sense it may have something tentative about it, for the possibility of revision is never excluded. Vain conceit, o man, that you in your short life and with your weak powers should have to perform all these labors anew with as much success! And the Confession is more than an indispensable regulative bond. As the work of

centuries it has authority even though not unconditional."

However great the value of a Confession is, it must also be noted that no one pretends that it stands above the Bible or takes the place thereof. It always professes to stand squarely and unreservedly *upon* it. And where doubt in regard to a doctrine obtains, the appeal is directly to Scripture as the final authority. The Confession of Faith published at Basel in 1534 says: "All these articles of faith remain subject to the judgment of the Holy Scriptures to whom we owe obedience." And so say all the Confessions. A Creed is simply a digest, an epitome of the doctrinal contents of the Bible. It aims to give this content in an orderly, comprehensive and carefully articulated form. It aims to do this with such scientific precision as the nature of the material will admit of. Hence, with a correct Creed we possess the Bible in fuller measure, just as a map will better give to the mind the total impression of a landscape than an attempt to visualize every square foot of the ground. Now the Bible is such a rich store-house of material, such a wonderful intertwining of history, poetry, prophecy, etc., that the most painstaking effort is necessary to present it in bird's-eye view to the understanding. The wealth of Divine thought and teaching is not laid down in a ready-to-hand, pre-digested form, lying in easy reach of everybody; but it is given in such a form as needs to be analyzed, assimilated and reconstructed in the consciousness of the examiner who represents the spirit of the time he lives in. As God's work in nature has a fineness of texture which the most powerful microscope discloses (and have the limits been reached?), as each advance of science opens up new wonders and glories of the universe hitherto unsuspected, so the more marvelous organism of the Mind of the

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Holy Spirit, the Supreme Designer and Architect of all things, who "brooded" over the waters, by Whom all life is given, the Spirit of the Sevenfold Wisdom of God, has "moved" upon holy men of God to write The Book which even in its lowliness shows forth Divinity, and we may thence expect that it shall tax all the ingenuity of man to explore its depths, lengths, breadths and heights.

When a society of believers organize themselves with certain beliefs and practices which find their expression in Creed and Confession, they must not be accused of "monopolizing religion". This is a current misapprehension. They are simply aiming to be true to the teaching of Scriptures as they see it, and which they must protect in their own jurisdiction. By so doing they do not question the reality of saving faith in others who disagree with them on divers doctrinal points and practices. Indeed, they will invite brethren of other households of faith to come with them to the Lord's table and invite their ministers occasionally to preach the Word to them. In the latter case one will expect that courtesy will prevent any such one from trespassing upon the good nature of the audience from preaching what would be contrary to their religious convictions.

The demand for acquiescence in the beliefs of a particular denomination, whichever one it is, is *a matter of good order* and *not* one involving the determination of a state of grace. It is such a mistaken thing to represent the issues today as raising the latter point. And then the orthodox are singled out as so very intolerant. It is strange that the orthodox in particular must always get the stigma of intolerance! It looks very much as if this is of a piece of the view of the law-breaker who constitutionally hates the policeman, because he is always

after *him*. Why should not good order have its intolerance as well as light has its intolerance of darkness? Any host will show intolerance to his guest if the latter persists to carry out ideas of his own in the former's own establishment. It is passing strange that the ecclesiastical *intruder* must be granted loving tolerance whilst the servant in the house gets obloquy for his *faithfulness*. Broadness is good, but you may not make it toleration of error and treachery against your particular trust. There is sovereignty in every particular sphere of thought and life. Nothing would seem to be more self-evident than the right of any school or party to determine its own identity, indicate its marks and expect all who wish to be reckoned as adhering to such a view to be faithful to it, and when this can no more be done, then peacefully to withdraw where a better accord can be found.

This brings up the question of heresy. Standard Dictionary thus defines the word: "Heresy is an opinion or doctrine, entertained by a professed adherent of a church, by a former member of it, or by one whose allegiance it claims, that is contrary to the fundamental or distinguishing tenets of that church." Now, while science and law pride themselves on clear-cut distinctions, the great mass of men would not have it so in the church: there it becomes intolerance not to allow everything the right of domicile. The term heretic is hated by them. Self-contradiction must be allowed in the church under the plea of broadmindedness and love. Modernism in particular boasts of its better insight of the spirit of the Master and its practice of his virtues, but it frowns upon the obscurantism and backwardness of those who would remain true to their vows and to the well-considered truths of the saints of the ages. What scrambled ethics! The Modernist insists in the name of love that the in-

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truder have at least equal rights with the owner. Dr. E. H. Kistler correctly characterized the situation when he said: "For a man to preach a different attitude than the accepted one of his pulpit denomination is spiritual piracy." Certainly! For divers passengers to mutiny against captain and crew and steer the ship in a wrong course and live under different regulations is mutiny. But what would you think of the ethics of the matter if these same mutineers should say, in trying to dissuade the captain and the crew from attempting to regain their lawful rule: "Be nice; don't be so rude as to use force; allow us also full liberty of action even if it is different from your ways; pray, fulfill the law of love and of Christ by showing this kindness and consideration!" The Auburn Seminary 'Chapel Bell' comments on this statement of Dr. Kistler's: "We submit that such a statement as that savors of intellectual slavery and sectarian autocracy. If a man believes that his denominational standards are not infallible it is his privilege and duty to stay in the denomination and correct them. Dr. Kistler's doctrine is the essence of Roman Catholicism applied to Protestantism. It is of a piece with the whole wretched mess of heresy trials, denominational shibboleths and medieval cocksureness." This is outspoken. However, is it "intellectual slavery" to be loyal to vows once taken? Is that "sectarian autocracy" when a minister does not need to stay where he is, not being subject to a Protestant Inquisition? That mutinous crew could talk after the same fashion. And should they be called to stand trial for their opposition to the established authority, they might possibly call the trial a "wretched mess". When we do happen to have authority and when its sphere of operation is definitely circumscribed and vows are taken to maintain them, what system of ethics

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does that Auburn Modernist have as his standard of ethical excellence? Furthermore, if a minister disagrees with these Standards of his Church the way is open to make an attempt at correction. If the membership cannot so see it and decide to retain the age-old interpretation of the truths of Scripture the presumption is on their side, and surely the primary rights in the case, and the dissenter is honorable only then when he withdraws and seeks the place where he can exercise his new views. There is opportunity enough for this purpose. The orthodox may be thought medieval, but in medieval times we can probably also find some sort of a rationalist. The orthodox is "cocksure"; so was Paul when he said: "I believe: therefore have I spoken." And the Apostle John, he the one that always spoke of love, was very cocksure. And we think the Modernist in particular is cocksure. But let him act honestly with it and go where he belongs, instead of intruding upon grounds which he has come to subvert.

If a minister persists in holding doctrines in conflict with the Standards of his Church, it is incumbent upon such a Church to take action. *The Christian Century* is to be commended for its honesty in saying on the matter: "If a church forms a creed—we disapprove of creeds for ecclesiastical purposes as our readers very well know — but if a religious body does assume the responsibility of framing a creed, it cannot escape the consequent and correlative responsibility of determining how seriously that creed is to be taken and how strictly it is to be regarded as a standard of doctrine." And *The Wall Street Journal* said: "Ministers who do not believe what they professed to believe when they were ordained would resign their jobs if they had the self-respect of the business-men they are only too ready to

lecture. Our modern preachers ready to start new philosophies, while clinging to old stipends, might show a more exact knowledge of the theology they discard." And many more instances are on record of the secular press condemning the dishonesty of heretic ministers refusing to leave the Church whose tenets they promised to defend.

"We believe that men should be as free to teach as the winds are to blow. But we also believe that the Presbyterian Church is a church whose creed in the most explicit and unmistakable language commits its ministers to certain definite views of Christ and the Scriptures. No men should be ordained to the ministry in the Presbyterian Church who cannot cheerfully accept the doctrinal teachings; and to countenance in Presbyterian pulpits a teaching which violates the creed of the church is as contrary to right as it is contrary to common sense" (*The Nation*).

There would be nothing strange in any other walk of life to enforce fundamental rights. But what an outcry arises when such enforcement is attempted within a church! The hue is raised: "Heresy-hunting!" "Heresy trial!" All are familiar with the cheap device by means of which even a good man or cause can acquire a mark of dishonor which can not easily be removed. It consists in assiduously cultivating a slanderous report and spreading it all around. If it succeeds in attaching a label made fast in the prejudices of the public it will require great courage to meet it. But must a man, must a church of sterling character fear? In times of wide-spread rebellion in a civil state it requires extraordinary courage to defend almost single-handed the honor of the flag. Traitors will seek to overcome such loyalty with cries of "disciplinarian", "martinet", "reactionary", etc. But no man of

sterling rectitude should be so swerved from his convictions. No one should be afraid of calling a man a heretic or joining others in a careful determination thereof. These things must not be lightly done, neither must controversy be sought for its own sake. "Ecclesiastical controversy is unavoidable when a principle has found entrance into the church which is foreign to her and threatens her identity, and when at the same time a powerful operation of her own life-principle obtains" (Prof. Rutgers). And is the situation as serious as this? Listen once more to the radical, but honest *Christian Century*: "How deep-going is the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy?..... Or are the fundamentalists right in claiming that the issue is a grave one, going to the root of religious conviction and involving the basic purposes and almost the genius of Christianity itself? A candid reply to such inquiries must be one of agreement with the fundamentalist claim. The differences are not mere surface differences, but they are foundation differences, amounting in their radical dissimilarity almost to the differences between two distinct religions.... Two world-views, two moral ideas, two sets of personal attitudes have clashed..... Christianity according to fundamentalism is one religion. Christianity according to Modernism is another religion..... Two worlds have crashed, the world of tradition and the world of modernism. One is scholastic, static, authoritarian, individualistic; the other is vital, dynamic, free, social" (Jan. 3, 1924).

This outspoken Modernist view agrees with as outspoken an opinion of the orthodox champion, Dr. Machen: "The plain fact is, disguised though it be by the use of traditional language, that two mutually exclusive religions are contending for the control of the

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Presbyterian Church. One is the great redemptive religion known as Christianity; the other is the naturalistic or agnostic Modernism, essentially the same, I suppose, as the religion of the Positivists, or of Prof. Elwood, which is opposed, not at one point, but at every point, to the Christian faith."

Such a situation justifies any attempt to ward off the impending dangers, to cut out the cancer. We cannot afford to deceive ourselves at the cost of life and must grapple with the horrid monster of heresy. Says Kuyper: "To deny the idea of heresy is in its last analysis a denial of the Scriptures as a special revelation of God. No heresy, but then also no church of Christ with a spirit of its own. No heresy, but then also we shall have to return to the lament of Pilate and say: 'What is truth?' Or else we shall have to gird ourselves for the task of a Sisyphus of ever *searching* for the truth. It is therefore altogether correct that the Modernist will not hear of heresy, but for us to confess Christ according to the Scriptures and at the same time to ignore the right of existence of the idea of heresy, is inconsistent and a lack of insight."

To ignore the idea of heresy is disloyalty and lawlessness. An Elder in *The Presbyterian* rather sharply but truly writes: "Now, is the minister who breaks the laws of his denomination less culpable than the bootlegger who breaks the law of his country? Do not both give practically the same reason for so doing; the bootlegger, because it curbs his personal liberty, and the minister because it restrains his freedom of speech. But is not the real reason the same too? The bootlegger makes money out of his defiance of the law, and the minister draws a good salary while he preaches contrary to the teaching of his denomination. Of course, one would not

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expect such an unprincipled man as a bootlegger to give up his unlawful business because of conscientious scruples; but should not a minister, who does not hold to the teachings of his denomination take the high moral grounds that he is taking money under false pretense, and quit his pulpit? There is no such thing as absolute freedom either of action or of speech, without infringing civil or ecclesiastical law. So why tolerate either lawbreaker? Are not both boot-leggers, in the sense that they are law-breakers and peddlers of poison?" (Jan. 17, 1924).

How differently have they acted who stood for the right and were hindered in so doing. We will only remind the reader of the heroism of the four hundred ministers in the great Scottish Disruption who left their churches, manse and salaries for conscience sake.

But to be fair, we must listen to what is said in justification of the course of the Modernists in remaining where they are. By what method of reasoning do Modernists justify themselves in remaining in their church affiliations though opposed to the Standards? *The Christian Century* of April 12, 1923, quotes Prof. C. P. Fagnani, of Union Theological Seminary, as follows: "A little reflection ought to show that an honorable man, a loyal man, one who really cares for the Church, instead of resigning and withdrawing and shirking responsibility, is conscientiously bound to remain in it and bring as many of his brethren as possible around to his way of thinking. Yes, it is his bounden duty to stand his ground and proclaim the truth as he sees it. He must staunchly refuse to withdraw of his own accord no matter how much averse he may personally feel to mere notoriety, strife and contention."

The important element Prof. Fagnani overlooks is that such a minister has *subscribed to adhere* to the Standards

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of the Church and so *promised to defend* them; his bounden duty is to be true to his word or to readjust himself. One may stand for his beliefs and bring as many people around to them as possible, but he may not honorably do so inside the denomination whose doctrine he has definitely accepted: this is mutiny and treason. But to stand outside and fight thence, is in accord with every notion of legitimate warfare. Responsibilities will not be shirked by fighting from the outside, and bounden duty can much better be performed from that direction. Double-dealing, even in a good cause, must be condemned by every honest man.

In our remarks we may have given offense to moderate liberals who do not wish to be classed with rationalists, possibly not even with Modernists, but who insist that they are true Presbyterians. But how can the "innocent bystander" escape being hit by stray bullets when he is dangerously near the crowd of mutineers? An outspoken, unequivocal stand, either on one side or on the other is the way of truth and safety today.

It is the opinion of many (Unitarians included) that the 150 Presbyterians who signed the "Affirmation" occupy a disingenuous position. They indeed profess adhesion to the Standards, and they fortify themselves with a special confession of their faith which, as far as it goes, looks good. But they are careful to add that the Confession does not commit them to certain theories of certain doctrines. *But this is the very point at issue. In the light of recent history their profession does not square with fact.* Why is it necessary to make such a strenuous effort to set themselves right before the Standards? Why all this ado to justify the Presbytery of New York? Why must this Presbytery be upheld when it licences men who refuse to declare full belief in

the Standards? Why must preaching which is decidedly off-color be defended? The key to the whole situation is that these brethren do not stand four-square to the Standards of the Church, when they allow of interpretations which compromise the clear wording of the Standards. Such actions are not, as they want it to appear, broadminded; on the contrary, they are disloyal and untrue. They invade the Scripture principle of the Reformation.

Liberals who have subscribed to a Creed hold that a wide latitude of interpretation of such a Creed should be allowed. But it must be clear that such an idea of a Creed is inconsistent with its very nature—its express purpose; which is, definitely to state the particular beliefs of a Church. In their Pastoral Letter of 1923 the American Episcopal bishops said: "To deny, or to treat as immaterial, belief in the creeds in which at every regular service of the Church both minister and congregation profess to believe is to trifle with words and cannot but expose us to the suspicion of dishonesty and unreality." Similarly *The Christian Century* said: "If the church means by its creed to define precisely the theology of all its ministers—and that seems to be the implication—then the church should act upon that theory and protect itself from variant forms of teaching. But meanwhile there come clear indications that this great denomination [the Anglican and American Episcopal Churches] does not really hold to that theory. And the Archbishop of Canterbury says: 'The study of theology imperatively demands freedom for its conditions. To tell a man to study, and yet bid him, under heavy penalties, to come to the same conclusions as those who have not studied, is to mock him'. So the Archbishop of Canterbury supports, as it seems, the general

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sentiment of the English Church, that, whatever the creed does mean in the life of the Church, it does not mean that freedom of thought and speech is to be limited by its formulations. Some of us think that the creeds have become excess baggage, that the churches would be all better off without them. But as long as they remain, no church is entitled to avoid the embarrassments which they entail by requiring the alleged heretic to be his own judge, jury and executioner" (Apr. 13, 1923). To be sure, these things were the very reasons for which the Creeds were formulated, and subscription denoted acquiescence with them, honest and straightforward. But no one is bound to remain identified with its plain teachings. Therefore if anyone feels a so-called 'gravamen', the constitutions of the churches indicate a way in which it may be considered: there is, in greater or lesser degree, a possibility of revision, to meet the altered views which may have arisen. But if this revision cannot be procured, that is, if the church after due investigation still holds fast to its creed, there is no way out for an honest dissentient than to resign his connection with a church with whose credal requirement he cannot agree. He must respect the church in its beliefs and a church will not take such a resignation ill. No one is compelled to belong to a church, but if he so elects, he does so voluntarily because he accords with its doctrinal and practical requirements.

Closely related to this is the feeling that subscription to a Creed after all fetters free thought and binds the conscience. To repeat once more the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury: "The study of theology imperatively demands freedom for its condition. To tell a man to study, and yet to bind him, under heavy penalties, to come to the same conclusions as those who have not

studied, is to mock him." But this is well answered by the Episcopal bishops of America in their Pastoral Letter of 1923: "So far from imposing fetters on our thought, the creeds, with their simple statements of great truths and facts without elaborate philosophical disquisition, give us a point of departure for free thought and speculation on the meaning and consequences of the facts revealed by God. The truth is never a barrier to thought. In belief, as in life, it is the truth that makes us free."

Absolute freedom is license, and near of kin to anarchy. Civil liberty is perfectly served in these United States of America by strict subjection to our national constitution. When we rejoice in the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free, we do not object that his requirements of service are definite and inexorable: these do not limit our freedom. Similarly, if one claims to belong to the Reformed household, he is enjoying certain blessings in the light of the Reformation; if he truly understands them, he will not feel any irksomeness or violence of his convictions, but a most cordial approval and whole-souled concurrence: he will not know how it could be otherwise. He cannot help himself from "coming to the same conclusions of thought" as others did. The very fact of perfect agreement is in his case as inescapable as the constancy with which the tables of multiplication always come true. Still we do not complain of the iron certainty of arriving at determinate results in our mathematical operations: we call it freedom. If then anyone in the household of Reformed faith feels uncomfortable therein, he is an alien; he is not of the same spirit; he builds on other generic foundations; he is a heretic; he belongs elsewhere and should go there. A Reformed theologian proceeds from such principles as *must* issue in a uniformity of general results.

CHAPTER IX

ARE THE STANDARDS MEDIEVAL?

Our Creeds and Standards speak of a range of subjects which are not casual or arbitrary: they lie in the very nature of things. Almost any religion presents these very subjects in some form or degree. And in Scripture certainly they lie at the very surface and meet one at every turn. Nothing worth while can be given in their place. There is no so-called "reconstruction of theology" possible if these subjects are left out of consideration.

In a previous chapter we have adverted to the three great principles of authority, which, expressed in another form, is very nearly equivalent to saying, that there are three great principles on which the material given by Scripture and in a measure issuing from human consciousness, is construed. We find the construction of this material in our Creeds and Standards. These exhibit the definitely established beliefs of the Church as it has carefully sought to construe them from the Scriptures. Thus we have the Apostles' Creed, and, speaking as we do in this treatise only of things Protestant, the Confessions of the Reformation.

Now the Liberal has raised the question that these Standards are medieval; that they are antiquated, static, misinterpretations of the real spirit and intent of Scripture.

To meet this objection intelligently, we need first of all to make a distinction between those things which pertain merely to the *form* as over against those things which pertain to the *matter*. The great Confessions of

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Faith date from the days of the Reformation. It can be granted that some expressions in them remind one of these times; and its phraseology may now and then be severe. But we are persuaded that objection against the Standards does not really turn on these points, as little as the antiquated diction of Shakespeare troubles the modern student, or the language of the civil courts, also rather ancient, gives offense to the eminent and cultured gentlemen of the bar. When the charge of medievalism is made against the Standards, *it is really leveled against their material content*. The quaint language is apt to be used as a lens to magnify the biased fancy. And so the objection actually turns upon things *which relate to the integrity of Reformed Theology*. And hence there is a suppressed desire for revision in the direction of newer ideas which are in conflict with much that is contained in the Standards.

We must remind ourselves once more that we can best find our way by proceeding from some principle of authority. We trust all agree that for a Christian theology we must get our material from Scripture, however we view it. Our Standards proceed from the Reformed principle. They give a theology that is comprehensive and well-ordered in its development. When once the Reformed principle stands firm and is consistently worked out, the range of doctrinal conceptions become so clear that they cannot be mistaken. That of the Liberal is nebulous, for they issue from a large region of doubt in which statements of Scripture are accommodated or cut out to meet private judgments. So much so that the Modernist admits the vantage-ground which the orthodox occupies. Says *The Christian Century*: "Nor should the defenders of orthodoxy be blamed too severely for joining the issue and forming the party of

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aggression. They have the creeds with them, and it may not be far wrong to say that they have the conventional view of the Bible with them. Modern theology is not Biblical in the old static sense of the term. The issues which divide liberal and orthodox thought are indeed as fundamental if not more fundamental than those which come to light in the Reformation. As in the Reformation the basis of religious authority has been shifted. The Reformation substituted the Bible for the authority of the Church, and the new reformation replaces the authority of the Bible with the authority of the spirit and the life of Jesus." And Dr. Shailer Mathews, of the University of Chicago, also admits the radically different principles which underlie these two views. Thus he wrote in *The North American Review*: "Widely considered. the threatened schism in Protestantism is a struggle between two so-called minds. Theological differences are only aspects of deeper differences. The Fundamentalist wishes to consider religion from the point of view of theology. Fundamentalism is seventeenth century confessionism *redivivus*. Modernism is a non-theological scientific application of the teaching and life of Jesus to twentieth century affairs."

Evidently then it all becomes a choice between two radically different views. This is far too much overlooked. The moderate liberal seems to think that there is a middle ground between the two principles; at least, that the Reformed principle admits of a moderate interpretation, and they do not perceive that this is virtually taking position *within* the lines of the enemy: *they have passed a definite boundary*. Of course, it is always commendable to avoid extremes, but in this case the accord with common-sense and with popular notions and with

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plausible impressions are not in evidence where clear-cut, precise demarcations obtain. Here is an immediate break with a principle which is evil, and whose logical course has ever shown up that way with increasing clarity. Our moderate liberals do not like to think so, but an honest liberal like *The Christian Century* sees it clearly and is outspoken. Listen to what it says: "How deep-going is the Modernist-fundamentalist controversy? Or are the fundamentalists right in claiming that the issue is a grave one, going to the roots of religious convictions and involving the basic purposes and almost the genius of Christianity itself? A candid reply to such inquiries must be one of agreement with the fundamentalist claim. The differences are not mere surface differences, but they are foundation differences, amounting in the radical dissimilarity almost to the differences between two distinct religions. Two world-views, two moral ideas, two sets of personal attitudes have clashed. Christianity according to fundamentalism is one religion. Christianity according to modernism is another religion Two worlds have crashed, the world of tradition and the world of modernism. One is scholastic, static, authoritarian, individualistic; the other is vital, dynamic, free, social" (Jan. 4, 1924).

This should be enough to show that the question is not one merely of form such as time can remedy, but *it is a question of identity*. Modernism is but a newer form of an older system of thought. The Confessions of the time of the Reformation all proceed from one general principle, and it is noteworthy how great the general agreement between them is. No one can mistake their family likeness. Hence, too, the doctrines developed in the dogmatic theologies of Calvin, Turretin, Voetius, Hodge, Shedd, Thornwell, Warfield, Kuyper, Bavinck,

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and so many more, all of them cannot possibly avoid the same general range of subjects and treat them on the same general lines. They are as unchangeable as sin and as constant as its only remedy. If they are medieval they are in the same sense as bread and water are medieval. They are as "static" as the truth. They are "authoritarian" as the will of the Most High. This makes them in the very truest manner vital, dynamic, free and social.

It is therefore not a choice of the changing fashion, but one between well-defined alternatives. The choice is not as between dead formalism and a living faith. Neither between correct doctrine and correct living. But the choice is between *reality* and *appearance*, between *correct* doctrine and *false* doctrine, between *the only true principle* which underlies the truth in all its import and tendencies, and *the false principle* which appears plausible but has no basis in fact. Which choice will our Reformed and Presbyterian ministers and laymen make? It will not do to wave aside with an impatient gesture certain beliefs which at first are unpalatable to our natural judgments, but which may nevertheless prove directly to result from our Scripture principle and so be founded in the depths of the Divine Mind. Charmed through words of much pretension and unction, many are swept off their feet when the man of modern culture begins to praise his breadth of vision. They are caught in the net because too little attention has been paid to estimating principles. It is well-known that for a long time there was little taste for the study of dogmatic theology, whence superficial ideas naturally came to prevail and many even lost the ability to think theologically. When then the various kinds of errorists come along with their plausible ideas urged with the enthusiasm of certainty, these people fall for it as they are resting upon a basis whose character

they have not gauged. The modern spirit of independence of any authority strongly asserts itself; every citizen feels strongly that he is a sovereign all by himself; he is self-sufficient; of course, this spirit must chafe at many an assertion of Scripture which runs directly contrary to it. This spirit justifies its attitude in viewing the other as "static" and it prides itself on its own excellence in satisfaction with its own "broadmindedness".

Hence, we face a definite situation as to whether the man who accepts the Standards is in the right, call it broadmindedness or not, as you please, of being up-to-or out-of-date or no. Are the doctrines as contained in the Standards and which characterize Reformed theology, *true*? Are they resting upon a sound basis? Are they generic to the principle which underlies them? If not, then of course they need to be revised, the sooner the better and as radically as need be. But if these doctrines are really Reformed and naturally flow forth from their principle, how can departure from them comport with broader vision? Are we to depart from the truth in deference to prevailing views, to fashion, to whims and to expediency?

It is urged, that there is a development in theology as well as anywhere else. And has not Robinson of Leyden said, that he was persuaded that "still more light would break forth from the Word of God"? He is right; but in what way will this additional light break forth? We cannot as yet get away from the only three principles in accordance to which such light must come; either on the Roman Catholic principle, on the Rationalist or on the Reformed principle. To proceed on any one of them is to destroy the integrity of the other two. There is a radical disagreement between the Modernist and the Reformed views. There is a development of theology

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on the Modernist basis, but from the Reformed point of view this is not development but a *departure* farther and farther away from the truth. It is self-deception on the part of even the moderate liberals that they can successfully carry through a milder interpretation of the Standards and still claim to be Reformed. It is called being "up-to-date" and "progressive", but it is *defection from the truth, retrogression, revolution*. Far from being up-to-date it is a *reversion* to the days of Porphyry and Celsus, and the Standards of the Reformation are, as compared with these men, of very "modern" date. Our Standards are by no means medieval but very much of pertinence and value to our present times.

Indeed, the orthodox actually *do* believe in progress; they are not static, fossilized. To be fair, it must be granted that the Reformed of the eighteenth century conceived of Reformed theology in that way. "Dr. Adolf Zahn, of Stuttgart, used to say that when Calvin had finished his Institutes of the Christian Religion, the Holy Spirit had spoken His last word. Liberals are of the opinion that the Confessionalists are forced to take the position of Dr. Adolf Zahn." But this is an extreme position and not shared by the great majority of Reformed theologians. And Dr. Steffens asks pointedly: "Are we obliged either to continually eat hash, the food of the stationary, or to accustom ourselves to eat the hasty-pudding of the progressives? That is not the alternative. There is a stability which comports with progress. Such stability makes movement sure and leading to good results. The combination, yes, the unity of the stationary and the progressive elements in nature is, as it were, an object lesson how necessary both are for the creation of a well-directed and sustained movement. May we not apply this to the spiritual domain of

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Church life? In the combination and co-operation of the stationary and progressive forces in the Church of Christ we find a rational expectation of great things to be accomplished in the fear of God, while antagonism between them would lead to a frightful catastrophe..... on the Confessional basis the Church ought to move on, not in an arbitrary, jerky manner, but in harmony with the principles which form the special tendency of the Churches of the Reformation, developing them into a strong life and inciting them to energetic activity..... Principles and progress combined give a healthy tone to conservatism, and keeps Christians from rushing into the arbitrariness and lawlessness of a reckless liberalism". And although we may not identify the objective truth with our subjective apprehension of the same, nevertheless we must strive to reach out after it, and we shall do this in the right way only then when the Scripture principle of the Reformation is our guiding principle: this alone will lead on to true progress whilst the Modernist with his pulling down of the labor of ages is but building on sand and constantly shifting his position even there.

We need but point to some of these great doctrines of Reformed theology to show how impossible it is to escape from them, and how they compel us to formulate them on well-considered lines. What is more permanent than the Reformed construction of the doctrine of God as far as we have it? Note His self-existence, His personality, spirituality, eternity, omnipresence, righteousness and holiness, His mercy and His love. The Standards furnish nothing medieval about this. From the modernistic camp you get ideas which rob Him of His personality; some have said He is finite and helpless before events; that He is "growing"; that He has framed a universe with laws from whose tyranny even He cannot escape.

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The doctrine of the Trinity owes its present well-nigh complete construction not to medieval times but goes very much farther back, even to the early Christian centuries. These men have so marvelously considered the problem from every point of view and so exhaustively compared Scripture with Scripture that since their day scarcely anything has been added. All that the Modernists have done is to approach a suspicious doctrine of Unitarianism. The Unitarians themselves have said that it is "inconceivable" that this has been overlooked. And how they think of the ethical side of the matter is seen in a paper signed by twenty-seven Unitarians, headed by Charles W. Eliot, former president of Harvard. They say: "With all courtesy and consideration, let us make it plain that religious teachers who play with words in the most solemn relations of life, who make their creeds mean what they were not originally intended to mean, or mentally reject a formula of belief while outwardly repeating it, cannot expect to retain the allegiance of men who are accustomed to straight thinking and square dealing."

The doctrine of Justification by Faith apart from works as contributing to a claim upon eternal life, was the life-giving power of the Reformation. It brought spiritual life to Europe. We agree largely with this statement in the Form of Concord of the Lutheran Church: "This article on Justification is chief among all the Christian doctrines; without it, it is not possible to obtain true and solid consolation for a disturbed conscience, nor rightly to know the riches of grace. This Dr. Luther also confirmed when he said: 'If this single doctrine be held in all sincerity, then the Christian Church shall endure genuine, harmonious and without division; but if this doctrine become corrupted, then it is impossible that the Church can successfully counter error or a fanatical spirit'".

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And this doctrine has not been advanced in any degree by Modernism. Its insistence upon the fruits of faith is nothing new, but its speaking of the glorious fruits without recognizing the root of faith is as old as rationalism and infidelity, going far back of the medieval days, even to the day when the Serpent talked with our first parents. The Modernist insistence upon the showing of love and service has never been denied by the Reformers and has been practiced by them to a larger degree than they have credit for them. The Dutch Calvinists were the most tolerant folks in Europe in their day and harbored Jews and Arminians while the latter, though in their creed they had extolled the love of God, were harsh towards the Calvinists when these Arminians were in power. And the Reformed Churches of The Netherlands and America have magnified the office of the deacon whose particular function it is to care for the poor and distribute such gifts with words of spiritual comfort, while outside of these circles this has become a matter of collecting money for running expenses sometimes entrusted to boys and girls.

In sum, the Modernist view of salvation is very largely that of acquiring the righteousness of God through works; Christ being largely the example to copy after, but the sinner is to "pull himself up by his own bootstraps". Our Standards indicate in language as clear as it is edifying the grace and the love of God which applies the merits of the cross to the contrite heart. That is not medievalism: the cancer of sin is still with us, but how many of our modern spiritual physicians are failing to use the only possible remedy for the desperate disease?

To show what becomes of Scripture when the Modernist proceeds to a reconstruction of theology on his lines we will pass on a book written by Dr. R. F. Horton with

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the title: "Reconstruction". The review of this book in *Christian Work* of Aug 26, 1915, has the title: "A Help to Doubters." This book at the very outset breaks with sound principles: the whole structure is based upon sand and is sure to bring chaos and to overthrow what it aims to support. We quote: "The object of the book is to restate the Christian religion in such a way that it may lay a new claim upon the thought of our time and heal the breach between the spirit and the intellect." In short, it teaches that truth has always been progressing; the New Testament is better than the Old Testament; since New Testament days Christianity has gone on in new developments; "Christianity as a living principle in the world was bound to seize the growing thought of men, and assimilate all discoveries in nature and in life; for God lives and 'works hitherto', and it is his living work and not the record of the past that constitutes the essential truth of Christianity. George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, said that the best use of the Bible was made when a man passed beyond the Bible itself to the changeless life and power of which it spoke". Thus Dr. Horton disparages Scripture as our reliable source of authority and glorifies the principle of evolution which still goes on in the processes of human thought. This makes the issue as clear as it can be between Scripture as our only authority for faith and life, on the one hand, and the Reason pure and simple, on the other. According to the proposed reconstruction of the religious truth, Scripture is largely antiquated, and useful only in so far as man judges it ought to be. The enlightend modern mind has advanced to that power of discernment that it can sift from Scripture its valuable elements, and with the new and better material which the consciousness of modern attainment has furnished it will be able to con-

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struct a higher and better system of theology than ever was possible. Now Reformed theology has always held to Scripture in its entirety as God's definite and final revelation to man. The fulness of truth is in the Bible we must study it to find its immense extent, but we may not set any of its teachings aside nor go beyond it. The book makes the fundamental mistake of substituting subjective opinion for objective reality. Hence it is suggestive that when Dr. Horton exalts Reason as a source of authority above the Bible he takes very largely the position of the Catholics and the Mystics. That is to say, Catholicism believes that inspiration has not ceased with the New Testament, so that new revelation is being given by means of the Pope; in like manner Dr. Horton believes in Christianity as such a force as brings forth new statements of truth which may go beyond the Bible. Similarly the Mystic gains views of religion which are not derived from Scripture but which well up from his own heart.

The book finds fault with the Apostles' Creed because it does not include a "word concerning the life that was lived, the character that was presented, or the teaching that was given by him who was born of the Virgin Mary and suffered under Pontius Pilate. But it is inconceivable that we should state the truths of Christianity today without mentioning the Sermon on the Mount or the teaching which led up to the Cross." That criticism sounds very beautiful! However, the trouble is that it is not safe to base religion first of all on what so readily may prove to be mere sentimentality. It is inexcusable to disparage the objective facts of Christianity and to rely upon a statement of duties and morals in which the Buddhist and the Confucianist can join us. And so mere religiousness without a definite objective cannot com-

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mend itself in so readily sacrificing truth. The Apostles' Creed therefore is correctly constructed in stating those basic facts which constitute Christianity. With this basis man is directed to the Living God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent; and thus repentance towards God can be preached and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Name given under Heaven whereby man must be saved.

In what gross darkness the modern mind is apt to wrap itself and how the anchor of the soul is dragging midst buffeting waves, is evident from this amazing passage of the reviewer of Horton's book: "We might well ask God for an inspired teacher with the width of vision, and the grasp of thought to understand and to state the point at which we find ourselves in the evolution of Christian truth. Many are striving to the best of their ability to see and to describe the position, and no effort, however humble, should be slighted; for it may be that the solution may come, not for one gifted seer, but from the contribution of all the seeking of devoted souls that are conscious of the need." Alas! alas! when Modernism has snuffed out the light of Scripture and insists on pursuing the *ignis fatuus* of its own disordered vision, then this pitiful prayer must be offered up! But it will be as futile and gratuitous as the prayer of Dives in Hell. To-day father Abraham would answer once more: "They have Moses and the Prophets; aye, the Son in Whom God has last spoken: let them hear them!"

Modernism, having cast off the old doctrines as medieval, finds itself necessarily very poor in its knowledge of Divine things. It feels that much needs to be done. But Horton thus comforts himself: "It is not necessary to wait for the reconstruction of the Gospel narratives for the elimination of the legendary and mythical elements. Jesus Christ stands before the life and

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imagination of men as a reality that sufficiently commends itself." But the Modernist is viewing as reality what his sources forbid. So much legendary and mythical envelops him. How can he at this distance determine but what anything about him is only exquisite conception. How little the progressive revelation of insight has yielded, and that so, uncertain! What a confession of poverty that they must wait for a gifted seer! And for what purpose? What is any Christ needed for when his identity is in doubt and his character and deeds for man are of no necessary relation to his eternal welfare? Oh, how the riches of grace connected with a living Redeemer whose character and work we know, has taken wings on the Modernist showing! For according to the tenor of the review modern theology is only just beginning to find some tentative lines on which to proceed. Modernist Christianity is such an indefinable thing and so subject to change that the *New York Evening Journal* was right in remarking: "One of the endless embarrassments of the foreign missionary is that the native, sought to be converted, is unable to keep up with the constant innovations in the proffered faith."

We can also give a concrete instance of the doctrinal teaching of this reconstructed theology. It listens to Christ. It is ominous that the views of Paul are looked at askance. From Christ, then, it learns the correct idea of God, namely, that He is a Father. "When we firmly grasp the fact that it depends on the Fatherhood of God, and results from the historic personality of Jesus, we discover the real and unassailable starting-point for the reconstruction of Christian theology." It is well that Dr. Horton will learn of Christ. *But he should be willing to learn more of Him than he states.* Modern theology is so obsessed by the love of God that it shuts its eye to

the other attributes of God and to the real condition of the human heart. The fact is that Scripture teaches that the natural man is alienated from God and therefore *fallen from sonship*, and the Father has become a *Judge*. To the unregenerate of our day as well as to the Jews Jesus would say: "Ye are of your father the Devil!" And Jesus with the very solemn, double "Verilies!" told Nicodemus what the natural man needs or he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. According to Scripture the brotherhood of man in its widest extent *is a brotherhood in the same condemnation*, and only through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ can he again be restored *by adoption* to sonship in the family of Jesus Christ "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named". The modern theological fad that God is the "Father of all men" has given a general impression of universal salvation, and theologians have much to answer for in thus having deadened the sense of need of repentance in order to be saved. Modernism is the latter-day cultured form of folly at which Jehovah bade the "heavens be astonished and horribly afraid and very desolate. For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me the Fountain of living waters, and have hewn out for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water!"

In view then of the fact that the doctrines of Christianity are definite, insomuch that there is no reconstruction of them possible, how mistaken the view of Prof. A. C. Zenos, who is reported to have said in the opening address at McCormick Theological Seminary in 1923: "Doctrinal systems are ever changing, and it will not stand that the system evolved for the nineteenth century will satisfy the twentieth century, and it follows that the next century will have another and a different

statement. Christianity cannot be confined to time-limitations nor to word limitations. Christianity is the concrete induction from the sum-total of Christian experience and acts. Vital experience of salvation through Christ."

This raises the further question that, let it be granted that a correct doctrinal construction of Christianity be obtainable, is this after all not negligible, because Christianity is most of all a matter of correct conduct and life? It is claimed that the Scriptures do not stress doctrine, and that a good life is the chief matter which is pleasing to God; that Jesus said little of doctrine; and that even Paul in I Cor. XIII laid the greatest stress upon love, and that the Epistles of John blossom out in scarcely anything else.

While it is true that in religion mere knowledge is a dead thing, it is also true that it is needed for the proper exercise of life: knowledge becomes its food and support, its guide and control. Salvation is not merely a force, but it is founded in the wisdom of God exhibited in thoughts and deeds worthy of Him. Scripture speaks of the "mysteries" of God: they are the "deep things of God" which the angels desire to look into and which the redeemed sinner may least of all neglect. "It is the office of the Holy Spirit to present mysteries of salvation, the truths which relate to the mediation of Christ and the riches of His grace in so penetrating and transforming a manner, as to render them vital, operating principles, the food and the solace of our spirits. It is His office to afford that anointing by which we may know all things by a light which is not merely directive to the understanding, but which so shines upon the heart as to give a relish of the sweetness of divine truth and effectually produce a compliance with its dictates" (Robert Hall).

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It is most edifying to read the accounts of the conversion and the spiritual experiences of many a humble saint of God (they were formerly much more in evidence than to-day) as they gave expression to their warm feelings, dwelling upon the glories of the Redeemer, viewing the cross in the light of the incarnation, ascension, session at God's right hand, etc. Their spiritual exaltation would even dare upon some consideration of the mysteries of election, finding there, as far as we are permitted, food for adoration and comfort as bearing upon their redemption through sovereign grace.

We repeat, it is true that a one-sided intellectualism has done harm to a live Christianity; but to-day the pendulum has swung to the other extreme *and has made us very poor*. It is imagined that true piety will be advanced through the prevalent discounting of the value of doctrinal aspects of our faith. But the worst of the situation is, that our present general attitude towards the mysteries of the faith *is one of scepticism*; hardly anyone knows just what belongs to the facts on which Christianity is based; "what is truth?" is the general quandary. The present departure from the time-honored "form of sound words" will readily lead to worse departure: it is the natural development of the evil principles which are in operation. Doctrinal beliefs are terribly shaken and the people are bewildered.

The Old Testament is doctrinal. It speaks of the unity and spirituality of God, and magnifies all His attributes. Creation and providence are much in evidence. Sin and redemption run as a scarlet thread throughout the entire Old Dispensation. The sacrificial system, which is apt to be slurred over as formal and ceremonial, is nevertheless grandly and essentially doctrinal, and edifying withal; and we may well believe that the pious Israelite

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saw more in them than we at this date give them credit for. The doctrine of sin; the corruptness of the heart; the penalty of sin; the necessity of repentance: of humble trust in God's mercy and pardon—all these and much more form the warp and woof of the Old Testament. And consider the numerous references to the great hope of the Coming One, His character and His work!

Let it not be said that the Savior did not care for doctrine. He spoke of the character of God the Father, not only as loving but also as righteous and ready to enforce the penalty of sin in its time. In his conversation with Nicodemus he touched upon the very foundations of spiritual existence—regeneration—from which as an indispensable condition spiritual quality before God obtains, and from which such value imbues human actions as to render them acceptable to God. Jesus spoke of judgment and painted its terrors; moreover He often mentioned hell-fire which Paul (little in favor with Modernists) hardly mentions. The institution of baptism and the Lord's Supper with their numerous doctrinal implications are of our Lord. He spoke of His own resurrection and of believers, and of His Second Advent.

It is not necessary to give instances from the Epistles of Paul. But even in John, the Apostle of love, and who insists so generally and emphatically upon showing this love, you will find some of the severest doctrinal expressions. "Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ. . . . Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John 2:22, 23). "For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. . . . If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting" (2 John 10). For a Modernist to appeal

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to Paul's great chapter on Love (1 Cor. XIII), as: "whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away" (8th verse); and: "the greatest of these is love" (13th verse) only shows what a poor conception he has of the signification of the "proportion of faith". It is against common sense as well as against the elementary laws of exegesis to base important views upon isolated texts without regard to others. Love is above faith and hope, but this may not be interpreted to mean that God will subdue everything by love. On the contrary, He will eventually end the dispensation of grace by the exercise of overwhelming force. When the door of grace is about to be shut, there will be a "certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:27). It must not be forgotten that while "God is love" it is also true: "For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

Modernists need not make such an ado about their concern for correct deportment. The orthodox have always insisted upon this and have properly held that it must and can only proceed from a holy root. Consider Calvin's rule in Geneva; the morality of the Puritans, notwithstanding any faults they had; the strict morality of the Calvinists of Holland, Scotland, France, etc., which elicited the admiration of their foes. Theologians are very one-sided when they extol the love of Jesus and point to his merciless scoring of formalism and hypocrisy which parades under the cloak of doctrinal correctness, as if the latter were of no moment. For that very reason correct doctrine stands so high in the Savior's regard that his greater ire was kindled in seeing so holy and glorious a matter prostituted to so base a purpose.

Folks of great reputation have said that the "spiritual" must be our primary concern, so that we must not stand

so strictly on the physical, the external. But pray, what is "spiritual"? Is there nothing "spiritual" about the birth of the Christ-child? Or about his death? Are these "externals" of no saving concern to us? Is there any discredit to God in having created a physical universe? And it is beneath our dignity to have been fashioned with a body, the most marvelous organism coming from God's own hands, which the Son of God is not ashamed to assume and retain forever? Neither let us fear that the new heavens and the new earth should not be a fit abode for the risen and glorified saints, the scene of angelic manifestations; nor will the Son of God in His transcendent majesty be averse to be in their company and walk with them!

Some people have worked themselves into a frenzy in shaming the orthodox for their efforts in correctly formulating the truths of Scriptures, and contending for them, and they say that the needs of the world are so great that it would be better to become practical and work hard to save the lost. Indeed, the latter must not be neglected, not by any means; but let brethren of strongly evangelistic cast of mind consider how much the integrity of Christianity needs to be maintained. When a fire is raging it would seem of prime importance first to proceed to turn on the water; but if some incendiary has been at work to tamper with the water-mains, it will be of even greater immediate importance to attend to the latter. If somewhere people are dying of thirst, the first duty of love would be to bring on water where first it could be found; but if it appear that the wells are poisoned it is a far greater duty to remedy the cause. It sounds magnificent to plead the cause of foreign missions and urge the dispatch of forces to China and other lands, but if recruits are sent who deny the verities

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of the gospel of saving grace, something else will be most imperatively necessary first of all. Dr. Augustus H. Strong has described this very situation most strikingly and his declaration fills one with alarm: "The unbelief in our seminary teaching is like a blinding mist which is slowly settling down upon our churches, and is gradually abolishing, not only all definite views of Christian doctrine, but also all conviction of duty to 'contend earnestly for the faith' of our fathers..... We are ceasing to be evangelistic as well as evangelical, and if this downward progress continues, we shall in due time cease to exist."

The term "evangelical" used in the previous quotation gives occasion to remark on the assertion of moderate liberals that while they may not agree with all the details of the Standards, they are nevertheless "evangelical Christians". Under this attractive term an intimation is given that their theology is an advance upon the strict and rigid doctrines set forth in the Standards, and they call their own view "evangelical Christianity"; and for that reason they claim they "have a constitutional right and a Christian duty within these limits to exercise liberty of thought and teaching". Such is the belief of those Presbyterians who signed the "Affirmation designed to safeguard the unity and liberty of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America".

We submit that for a Presbyterian or Reformed to talk like this, is to be guilty of a confusion of concepts. What is "evangelical Christianity"? Many denominations lay claim to that designation, and rightly so. The Methodists do; the Low Church Episcopalians do; and many more. But for the sake of accurate connotation we have to speak of Presbyterian and Reformed Christianity, and we do not need to apologize for it. That is *our* type. We

claim that *our* system of doctrines is Christianity as well as theirs. We likewise claim that ours is as *evangelical* as theirs is. But we need further definition to give a clear idea of our views, and so we specify that our type of Christianity is of the Reformed or Presbyterian *variety*. We are compelled to do this if we are to prevent confusion and equivocation.

What now is the test by which we can distinguish ourselves as Presbyterians and Reformed from the other denominations? That test is the Confession of Faith. That is why these Confessions are called Standards of the Church: they are the standards of measurement, of purity, of identity. It is simply *not to the point* to talk about interpreting the Westminster Confession of Faith "evangelically", or even Scripturally. We have to interpret that Confession at its face value if it is a standard at all. It was made for that purpose *from* Scripture, and as exactly reflecting Scripture. If you cannot agree with the statements of the Confession there is a way open for revision. But note well, that revision is not the question at issue in the "Affirmation": that paper states that the Confession is "accepted" and that "sincerely". The system of doctrine in the Confession is expressed clearly enough. Now, a careful examination of the views of divers moderate liberals will reveal the fact that the latitude of interpretation which they desire is really *dissent* from the true language of the Confession, and when they call it a sincere acceptance of the Confession they do so by smuggling in another interpretation which is excused, or sugar-coated, with the equivocal characterization of its being "evangelical". On the face of it this "Affirmation" is loyal to the Presbyterian Church; but it is a chaotic mix-up to apply the official Presbyterian yard-stick to articles which measure short

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of the requirement, and then to assure the customer of its correctness on the strength of the virtue of broad-mindedness, at the same time intimating to the customer that he ought to feel ashamed of himself in straining at such peccadilloes.

If the foundations do not lie secure the well-meant efforts of gospel preachers will face failure. The command to repent cannot strike home unless the sense of sin be strong; and this again depends upon a correct view of the holiness and righteousness of God. And, once more, in the light of this the character of Christ as a person and in his atoning work can best be seen, and so becomes effective for the appeal to believe in him. The fuller the view of him, in the correct position in which Scripture places him in every relation, the better for the success of the Gospel. This the Standards furnish us. They are so excellent, so evangelical, so applicable to modern conditions even, that an honest study of them will convince any one that they leave very little to be desired: they are perfectly true to the Word, and in the comprehensive way in which its riches of the Divine wisdom and grace is set forth, they deserve an enthusiastic acceptance.

In his Encyclopedia Kuyper has given a most admirable review of the history of theology as a science. In a brilliant paragraph he points out the insufficiency and the weakness of piety without proper relation to its doctrinal basis. He refers to the days of the Pietists when "theology had become too abstract; when it did indeed look for its foundation in the Scriptures, but it took this Holy Scripture too one-sidedly as a revelation of doctrine, and hence lost the spiritual reality out of sight, and forgot that Luther had indeed found in Scripture the rock on which he took his stand, but that

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he also clung to this rock with both his hands. After all, the animating motive for theology must always proceed from the person who cultivates it. Spener felt this; hence the reaction against orthodox theology which went out from him and his followers; but it was a reaction which, as things are apt to go, threw out the child with the bath. Pietism became in its basis *antitheological*. However much blessing this movement has brought unto the churches, it was powerless to bring theology out of its sterility unto new vigor. To be sure, it did much in furthering various studies which benefited the church, but it remained stationary as *theology*. And when the stream of church-life flowed away from beneath it, it eventually proved to be an unreliable floor of ice which cracked and collapsed as soon as Philosophy threw itself thereon with all its weight" (II. Sec. 69 *fin*).

Good people who glory in the term 'evangelical' and who would exalt the 'essential' things of Scripture, that is, those which are concerned in salvation (this is Pietism), forget that evangelical beliefs must rest on secure grounds in order to withstand the attacks of rationalism and permanently to endure. Today Modernism is dissecting Scripture and estimating the relative value of its different parts, and it does this with a learning and a skill which carries almost everything before it. Now, through their methods the very things which the evangelicals set so much store by are being undermined and heavily discounted. These higher critics are not godless infidels, but they lay claim to true piety, and they say they heighten the value of the Word. And numbers have fallen before their arguments and somehow have lost their original 'evangelical' fervor. It is possible that our modern pietists can go on in the way they do, provided they *ignore* these attacks and new

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views, but when they begin honestly to face them (and they must come to it some time or other), they will find themselves in grave difficulty. They will then feel a crying need for some solid foundation to successfully weather the storm. The only thing which can do this is the Reformed principle of authority, and involved in this, is its entire 'theology'—despised so much. They will feel its indispensability. Unless they take their stand there, their history will resolve itself into a constant retreat from one position to another, and the issue, a sort of catastrophe of faith. This is what Kuyper meant in his magnificent figure of speech: "And when the stream of church-life flowed away from beneath it, it eventually proved to be an unreliable floor of ice which cracked and collapsed as soon as Philosophy threw itself thereon with all its weight." He means to express thereby that when spiritual life, which was the main support of its defective views of the authority of the Scripture, became weak; and when Philosophy, that is, the worldly wise reasoning on religious things, critical methods which are determined by human estimates, bear down upon these defective views of the grounds of our faith, then it will become evident what a flimsy foundation feeling and convention will prove to be. Then the argument of the Modernist will begin to avail, and the 'evangelical' note will gradually be lost as it will be looked upon as unhealthy and somewhat fanatic. Thus it went with Pietism; thus, in a way, ran the course of the spiritual history in the case of Cardinal Newman; and thus it has come to pass in ever so many of present day ministers who once gloried in the cross, but for whom the purchase price of their redemption has come to be viewed as a business transaction unworthy of Deity and crude in its ethics.

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In Section 71 of his Encyclopedia Kuyper brings the history of theology up to the date of his writing. Although the questions underlying the present Modernistic controversy were then already in evidence, they were but smoldering; but since his death they have broken out into blazing flame. Now, while Kuyper entitles his section "The Period of Resurrection" he also points out the fact that this new life exhibits a strong pietistic cast coupled with insistence upon the practical side of Christianity. Generally speaking, present day theology shows much of compromise. Sharp lines of distinction are being avoided if not abhorred. There is indecision, equivocation, pacifism, which have not clarified the issues nor furthered peace. Hence, the decided activity of Modernism proves that the sleeping lion of rationalism has taken advantage of the neglect to cage him for good, and he is now rampant, and himself mercilessly forces the attack. Modernism is by no means afraid of temporizing, nor does it smooth over its own sharp points, nor does it abhor dogmatism when its own dogmas are concerned. We have entered upon a distinct phase these last few years. The evangelicals mean well, but they do not realize that demoralization attends their course. They neglect painstaking study too much, which is always necessary and cannot be offset by devotion to things practical. There needs to be a willingness to see the real points at issue. These things will never be settled until they are settled right.

Furthermore, the need and propriety of all this should be learned from our opponents. Study, devotion to principle and sharp distinction are cultivated and prized *by the others*. And therein lies *their* strength, and thereby they achieve success. *Christian Century*, for instance, does this to perfection on the Modernist side. There it

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is confessed that they as yet have but begun to develop a theology on their principles, and they evidently plan to go about it on scientific and well-conceived lines. We find the same disposition among the Roman Catholics. They are thoroughly assured of their position; they do not swerve from it in the least, and therein lies their strength. They openly boast of the sad plight of the evangelicals, and they believe (and rightly so) that the continuance of their present superficial, hesitating course will inure to the benefit of rationalism and catholicism. Hence the orthodox too should bestir themselves to come to a clear understanding of the situation; to gain a firm grasp upon their principle of authority and like their forefathers to quit themselves like men in order to maintain and defend it. As the Union could not endure half slave, half free, neither can Protestantism thrive on a divided source of authority, one of which is *false* and the other *neglected*! As men of truth and sincerity we must become well advised of our position, there take a deliberate stand, and thence work out our theology. Definite positions are always favorable to progress. And we should not be afraid of theology provided we are well assured we have hold of the right one. We need never be afraid of the right theology as it must inevitably conserve piety and effective practise in the long run, while a faulty theology even with the warm glow of mysticism will eventually run to seed. Today the Protestant world stands before a tremendous alternative which can only be adequately met when we can give ourselves a serious, intelligent, well-advised account of the situation.

CHAPTER X

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

This notable address of our Savior has drawn attention from many different directions. Friend and foe have alike admired it. One need not therefore wonder that its contents should have been appropriated in many ways. By many it is regarded as so comprehensive in scope, so admirable in spirit, and so wide of application that it can be used as a satisfactory program by all for religious purposes.

The Modernist in particular has no words of praise strong enough to express his high opinion of it, and to consider it to be the every essence of the teaching and spirit of Christianity. "The theology of Jesus, his thought about God, is the most winsome and wholesome that the world has known. To him [Jesus] God is not a monarch, he is Father. The sermon on the mount is pregnant with the concept of God as Father" (*Chr. Century*, Apr. 12, 1923). Still, in that "most winsome" address Jesus spoke once and again of hell-fire (Matt. 5:22, 29, 39); and he insisted on a man's reconciling himself with his brother at his infinite peril (Matt. 5:25, 26). And in the case of those who refuse to do this, as also in the case of those who say: "Lord, Lord, have we not." Jesus will not act with loving indulgence, but as judge and monarch he will say: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity!" (Matt. 7:22, 23).

Says *Christian Work* in referring to a statement giving

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a summary of certain "common basic beliefs" that they "leave a good deal to be desired. How different is such a summary of Christianity from the summary of the essentials for life given by Jesus Himself. How foreign most of it to the Sermon on the Mount. And where is the constitution of Christianity if it is not there? The absorbing interest of Jesus Christ was in the Kingdom of God on earth. Has not the time come when we can define Christianity in the words which most authentically come from Jesus Christ Himself?" (Sept. 1, 1923). No wonder that some have complained that our Creeds contain little of what is found in the Sermon on the Mount. It may be noted, though, that the first article of the Apostles' Creed is all there: "I believe in God the Father, maker of heaven and earth." But this is about the extent of it. However, it is very strange that a demand should be made to construct a Creed on lines of conduct and emotions. The Constitution of the United States of America serves a basic purpose to indicate the nature of our government, to give warrant and direction for the discharge of all kinds of civic functions, and thus it will be easy for our citizens to conduct themselves properly in conformity to the genius of our free institutions. Similarly, the constitution of a Church does not consist in moral maxims, or in some pious aspirations. It is astonishing to note the superficiality of an eminent man who said: "My idea of fundamentalism and liberalism in an ethical or religious creed will be found in the eighth verse of the sixth chapter of the book of Micah. I do not believe that the Lord requires of us on this planet any more theology than that." How poor we make ourselves thus! What a premium we thus set on ignorance! What a flat contradiction to ever so many passages of Scripture which bid us "go on towards

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perfection"; to "comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height"; to trace out the "unsearchable riches of Christ"; etc. It is of prime importance first to look after the identity of the Christian religion, to understand its foundations and principles. If these lie secure and sound in our apprehension the practice and enjoyment will have a readier and safer course. Without a proper foundation (so this very Sermon on the Mount teaches in its conclusion), we "shall be likened unto a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended; and the flood came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house. And it fell; and great was the fall of it!"

Still another opinion is illuminating. "The unique moral attitude of Jesus, with its basis of faith in the salvability of all men, will influence Christian ethics much more profoundly than it did in orthodox thought. The sermon on the mount was more or less irrelevant to the older orthodoxy with its scheme of salvation, and was betrayed by its conception of biblical authority to give undue emphasis to Hebraistic legalism. Liberal theology has liberated Christian ethics in a day in which the world is sadly in need of the unique idealism of the sermon on the mount" (*Chr. Century*, Feb. 15, 1923).

Certainly: we all agree that this discourse of our Lord was a wonderful address. It indeed breathes forth an "unique idealism". However, we submit that the "older orthodoxy with its scheme of salvation" has very well understood it, and, as we shall undertake to show more at length below, has construed it admirably. The Sermon on the Mount exalts the righteousness of God and holds it up for human imitation. It is silent on the power which makes possible such exalted conduct. Our Lord had his reasons for that, and we must be careful about

constructing doctrines out of the silences of Scripture. But the Modernist finds that power of living in conformity to Christ's sublime directions, ready at hand: the very beauty and attractiveness of the words are capable of furnishing all the incentive and urge necessary to its imitation. The Modernist insist upon strict obedience. "Do this and thou shalt live!" And in so speaking we submit that the Modernist is more guilty of trusting to a sort of "Hebraistic legalism" than he twits the orthodox with who lives and works through grace. Whence we dare affirm, that, on the orthodox showing, the Sermon on the Mount has effectively influenced conduct better than the Modernist can hope for. It is a tremendous mistake on the part of the Modernist in insisting so much upon fruits to be shown, he neglects taking into account that the stock of the tree and its roots must be of a congruous nature. He too much disregards the necessity of saving faith, the principle of spiritual life, and the fact that this derives its power from the Savior by virtue of his crucifixion. In this way the Modernist stands dangerously near those who are the outspoken enemies of the Cross. "The oriental Brahmin with his western education says just what the Boston Brahmin says: 'Let us have the Sermon on the Mount or praise of the character of Christ, but not the *kasam*, rubbish of the Cross'." Yes, we know that the Modernist does not mean to dispense with the Cross altogether; nevertheless he interprets it in a way which pretty well suits all kinds of cultured self-righteousness and self-sufficiency. Note their view of it: "The difference in the soteriology of the old and new theology is no less important. Catholicism conceived redemption as a purely historical achievement which the individual could appropriate by conformity through an external trans-

action. The reformation had the same conception of the historical achievement but insisted that its blessings could be appropriated only in a spiritual experience. It believed the moral life to be an inevitable fruit but not an integral part of the process of salvation. If the new reformation is wise, it would continue to insist, as it generally does, that moral achievement must have its dynamic in spiritual experience and it will not deny the profound redemptive power of the historical fact of the cross; yet its particular emphasis is that the moral life is a part of the very process of salvation. This change of emphasis is obvious and important and the defenders of orthodoxy have a right to call attention to it" (*Chr. Century*, Feb. 15, 1923). The very radical mistake here, a characteristic one, and which according to the honest confession of *The Christian Century* makes Modernism almost a "new religion", is that the fruit is simultaneous with the root, the cause with the effect. The orthodox soteriology speaks of an experience which is due to the work of the Holy Spirit, and not to any works of righteousness which we have done. The Modernist finds the root sound enough to bring forth the right fruit and man needs but so to decide. "Salvation is seeing that the universe is good, and becoming a part of that goodness" (Clutton-Brock). After all, character is the Divine requirement apart from any doctrinal construction of the indispensable merits of the Cross, so they think.

This construction of soteriology is called the "new reformation" by the Liberals. We do not hesitate to call it a *fresh reversion to an old error*. It is actually the error of the very Pharisees whom the Liberal denounces. It is the doing of works as the ground for Divine favor: it is "Hebraistic legalism". And great are the efforts to bring forth such fruits. Indeed, against the claims of

orthodoxy much needs to be done to seem justified in the new conception of Christianity. And indeed the fruit often looks very good to the eye: even saints are often deceived thereby. Nevertheless the spiritual perception which is sensitized through divine grace, sees otherwise: and for them its taste has not the heavenly sweetness of such fruit as is matured under the rays of the Sun of Righteousness unhindered by the shades of worldliness and self-righteousness. There is absolute necessity for the Divine life to be implanted, whence fruits pleasing to God and worthy of repentance can be brought forth. So the Master Himself taught Nicodemus. So emphatic was He about it, that he stated that truth twice and in close succession and each time enforced it with a double solemn "Verily!"

What we therefore affirm is according to the teaching of Jesus Himself. The Modernist relies for his theology on the very words of the Savior. Of what nature this dependance upon his words is, and in how far they accept even these will appear from a typical quotation. "We are brought closest to his teaching in the synoptist Gospels [how convenient thus to get rid of the passages of John, such as the requirement of regeneration in the discourse with Nicodemus, and the requirement to "search the Scriptures which testify" of Christ] and especially in those portions that record his sermons, parables and his conversations. In these he shows a fond familiarity with portions of the Old Testament. Evidently he has winnowed for his own purposes and had kept what was usable in his proposed new kingdom. The sermon on the mount is less a sermon than the platform of the Master's kingdom. Read in this light, it is as significant for what is not in it as for what is there. In it there is not a word about circumcision or the sabbath, though the

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Jews placed tremendous emphasis on both. There is not a word about the elaborate sacrificial system, or the day of atonement, or the order of priests, or the laws of taboo, or ceremonial washings or merely ritual sins and the various sacrificial purifications for them. What a mass of tribalism and ritualism and legalism and sacerdotalism falls away the moment the Savior steps out onto the really catholic platform of his sermons and prayers and parables! He even takes special pains to repeal certain laws under the formula, 'Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time. . . . but I say unto you' thus putting his own authority over against that of the ancient tribal and ethnic legislators. And all the while that he is doing this he is affirming that he came 'not to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfill them'" (W. J. Lhamon).

How poor the Modernist makes us in our spiritual treasures! For the essence of our religion—for the part upon which we can depend—is to be sought in the Gospels. No; not in all of them. Only in the Synoptics, so that the rich spiritual Gospel of John falls out. But even these Synoptic Gospels are colored by the views of the writers. In them we are to look for the very words of the Lord Jesus: the sermons, the parables, the prayers. But in how far are even these authentic? Who is to decide that? What a tremendous strain it puts upon human discernment at this late date to separate the true from the false! But why should the Modernist complain that so little is said about the sabbath, the day of atonement, etc., in the Sermon on the Mount? He hates all these things as is evident from his impatient way of holding them up to contempt and connecting them with unworthy ideas not gotten from the sacred page. Hear him droning it out: "elaborate sacrificial system, the day

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of atonement, the order of priests, the laws of taboo, the ceremonial washings or merely ritual sins and the various sacrificial purifications. mass of tribalism and ritualism and legalism and sacerdotalism". How this all is grossly misunderstood and misdirected! But note how the Epistle of Hebrews glorifies these very things! It is well that so little of this is found in the Sermon on the Mount, for if it had been there, how summarily the unerring judgment of the Modernist would have excised it as relics of "tribalism and ethnicalism": as he has worked himself up into a hatred of these things of course they could not be authentic.

We may as well confess that indignation has taken hold of us as we read such travesty of holy things. We choose to believe that our Lord did very little "winnowing of the Old Testament for his future use". He ever speaks with the greatest respect of all the Old Testament. He endorsed all of it in many places. "Ye search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me!" We choose to regard not only his words but also his deeds, his miracles as authentic. And the Modernist makes a palpable exegetical mistake when he thinks that our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount repealed part of the Mosaic legislation when he said: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time."; this did not refer to the repeal of any part of the Scriptures but to the perverted use made of them by the Scribes and Pharisees.* He clinched this

* In the passages which Jesus quoted (Matt. 5:21, 27, 33, 38 and 43) he taught that the Scribes were giving them an interpretation not warranted by the Scriptures, and that they had even added unto the words of the Law. (vs. 43). If we are not to bring the Savior into contradiction with other expressions He uttered and with divers passages in the New Testament, we may not so interpret His words as though they were designed to supersede the Law. On the contrary, he is at pains to show

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when he said in this very Sermon on the Mount: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17, 18).

But let us pass on to a constructive view of the Sermon on the Mount. To this end we will consider these two questions: What is its relation to the Dispensations? and, What is its character and use?

I. On considering what the relation of the Sermon on the Mount is to the Dispensations, it is first of all to be noted in what time and under what circumstances it was uttered.

We speak customarily of the Dispensations of the Law and the Gospel. The former is so held to be the period in which God treats with Israel under types and shadows; the latter dates from the time when these were fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ. The period of the Law is so called because in it God revealed His holy will to Israel and made regulations for its observance. He also spoke of the bitter consequences of its transgression. The period of the Gospel is conventionally the more gracious and indulgent Dispensation in which God's love is seen to best advantage.

how the full import of the Law extends **even farther** than the bare wording would seem to indicate. Neither is the 33rd verse an absolute prohibition against the taking of an oath, but rather, that true piety should not find it necessary to take an oath. It will have to submit to the requirements of the legally constituted civil authorities if they should require it. And even the 38th verse refers (in the Pentateuch) to the exercise of civil functions in giving restitution for damages, but our Lord condemned the use of that passage for furthering private revenge and the like. An ordinary use of common sense and the plain rules of exegesis will clear up most satisfactorily ever so many passages which Modernists use in a plausible and artificial way.

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However, much misapprehension is current concerning the nature of the terms applied to these Dispensations. The common idea is that the Law specifically reigned before Christ, and that grace specifically reigned after Christ; that men were to attempt their salvation by the deeds of the Law in the Law-period, and that they were to be saved through grace in the Gospel-period; that the Law-period was a severe one, and the Gospel-period the mild one; that God was harsh under the former Dispensation, and tolerant under the latter.

Now we may reasonably expect that unity and consistency must obtain in both Dispensations so as to harmonize with the immutability of God, as this must be reflected in His dealings with sinners under both Dispensations. The fact is, *that all the currently held characteristics of either Dispensation apply under the same circumstances and aspects equally and completely to both.* That is to say: You will find in the Old Testament as tender and merciful expression of the love of God as in the New (see Ex. 34:6, 7; Psalms. 103:8, 13; Isaiah. 49:15; 66:13; Jeremiah. 31:3; Jonah 4:2, 11; etc.). On the other hand, you will find in the New Testament as severe denunciation of sin and flaming of wrath as in the Old (see Matthew. 16:6, 7; 23:13-16; Romans. 1:1-18; 2:5; 1 Corinthians. 16:22; Hebrews. 12:29; etc.). The Law was indeed given by Moses as the expressed will of God, but its demands have not ceased by any means under the New Testament. In fact, the New Testament brings out with added clearness and insistence the high demands of the Law with its eternal value and immutable claims. Neither was the Law given in the Old Dispensation as a means to secure salvation, as little as it is under the New. Under the Old Dispensation it was a tutor to lead elsewhere than to mere Law-observance for securing

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pardon and peace. Such a result was then to be found, as at present, in the grace of God in the sacrifice provided for sin. In the Old Dispensation this was the oft repeated sacrifice of animals which God accepted in lieu of the coming sacrifice of nobler value. The fact that blood was always being shed must have struck every observant Israelite with the thought that something else, other than the deeds of the Law, was needed for his acceptance before God. The contrite and believing Israelite, on laying his hand on the sacrificial lamb, was, unbeknown to himself, really laying his hand upon the head of Christ, the Lamb in God's regard slain from the foundation of the world, and so available for all time. Such an Israelite was justified by faith apart from the merits of the Law, even in that time, as Psalms 32:2 abundantly proves: "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity". And there are a number of passages in the Old Testament which point out the futility of finding salvation through the keeping of the Commandments. Therefore, in short, the great difference between the Old and the New Testaments lies not in the presence of the Law and an expectation of salvation to be obtained through its observance, but the great difference lies in this, that the Old Testament presents the grace of God under types and shadows, and in the New Testament the full light of the reality breaks forth.

Furthermore, what is meant by the term 'legal' and 'evangelical'? May we say that there is a 'Law-period' and a 'Gospel-period'? Their real character needs to be clearly understood if our conception of things do not lead us astray. We must be careful in employing such terms. Indeed, there was 'gospel' in the Old Dispensation. It is significant to read: "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith,

preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed" (Gal. 3:8). "For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them" (Heb. 4:2). Hence, according to these texts, the Gospel-period goes back at least to Abraham. This gives every reason to push it back still farther, for in fact it begins immediately after the Fall, when God said: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). And so it must be well understood that the strictly legal period, when man earned salvation by works, obtained in the days of Adam's *probation*, and it ended with the Fall. With the Fall grace began, and since that very time man by it alone could be saved, and not by works. Nor was he supposed to attempt it. Of course, the measure of the exhibitions of grace differed in the two periods divided by the Cross; but the principle of division did not lie in the *measure* of grace but in its *clearness*. Hence, the long period of grace from the Fall till the present time must be designated and divided as follows: 1. The period of the types and shadows of grace; and 2. The period of the full realization of grace in fulfilled type and ceremony.

It will be asked, What then is the significance of the giving of the Law? In answer please consider that the Law of Sinai did not initiate transgression of God's holy will, but it was given to render transgression *more pointed and definite* (Rom. 5:20). In that sense "sin abounded", and in that sense also, as making escape possible even then, "grace abounded" also, while as a matter of fact the mercy and grace of God was as great under the Law as under the Gospel. Thus Titus 3:4 must be read with care: not that the "kindness and love

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of God our Savior" *began*, but they "*appeared*". The words of John 1:17, "For the Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" must be explained thus: We have had the Dispensation of the shadows of grace, in which Moses and the Law and its ceremonies were prominent, but now the fulness of grace, seen in its true light, has come to pass.

Incidentally it is to be noted that this view of the matter is of great importance in our construction of the doctrine of Infant Baptism. We believe that God made with Abraham a Covenant of *Grace*. While its ceremonial detail lay largely in type and shadow, its fundamental aspects were necessarily of grace. Thus, the bloodiness of the rite, the eight days, and the national reference were of the shadow, but the covenant engagement with the inclusion of the children pointing to spiritual benefits were God's fundamental method of grace which could not be broken by the passing of the Dispensations, but they acquired that clearness which fully brought out the depth of the Divine love pervading His good pleasure, from which the Reformed start out to construe the doctrines of Scripture.

II. We are now ready to consider what the character and use is of the Sermon on the Mount.

It must be carefully noted that the Sermon on the Mount was delivered in the day of the shadows. "God sent forth His Son.....made under the Law" (Gal. 4:4); that is, in the Dispensation of the shadows. As thus subject to the Law, it became Him to "fulfill all righteousness". Christ did not perform its ceremonies from a legalistic motive, but to share on our behalf the grace which was so typified. When then Christ "opened His mouth and taught", He could not possibly utter the language of the complete fulfillment, but He spoke

from the standpoint of the prefigurations. And what He said was not said out of the narrowly ceremonial aspects of things, but from the standpoint of true religion as manifested in the regenerate disposition and reflected from the holy will of God. His discourse therefore respected God's holy will, expressly and tacitly conveyed in the Law according to which man ought to live. Hence, in that discourse *the Law*, as expressing God's holy will, *received advanced interpretation*. This will appear from an examination of the contents of the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus begins His immortal address by naming various characteristics of true religion (the Beatitudes). Then He adverts to the Law as the rule of life. His very first utterance in regard to this is in full accord with what we have stated above: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy but to fulfill." That is, the Law is immutable, but Christ brings it out more clearly in His instructions and deeds, in His life and in His death. He proceeds to clear it of rabbinical sophisms; not to make it "evangelical", as some imagine. For that word has a *soteriological* bearing. But Christ interprets the Law in its real meaning and spirit. His is therefore a high interpretation. Christ continues by condemning externalism in religion (Matt. 6:1-18). Then He portrays true consecration and trust (6:19-34). The charitable disposition (7:1-6); encouragement to prayer (7:7-11); and in the twelfth verse is given the great summary of true charity. Next we have an admonition to choose the right portion (13, 14); a warning against false teachers (15-20); and against false professions (21-23). And as a conclusion, the diverse character and different end of the doers and non-doers (24-27).

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In short, the design of the Sermon on the Mount is to set forth true righteousness. That must be hungered after; for it, we must be willing to endure persecution; it must exceed that of the Pharisees; it must be first sought with the Kingdom, and "all these things shall be added" unto us. The standard of attainment must be God Himself: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect." That is, there must be "full development, growth into maturity of Godliness" (Scofield on Matt. 5:48).

Further, what use are we to make of the Sermon on the Mount?

As absolutely necessary to salvation, regeneration by the Holy Spirit has obtained since the Fall and hence also in the Law-period. It was in the very days of the shadows that Jesus spoke so positively about it to Nicodemus. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary for true religion. And it must be noted that when Jesus spoke of true religion in the Sermon on the Mount He simply *left in abeyance* how it was gotten and whence the power is derived through which man is able to realize it in practice. Since Jesus presupposes the presence of the new life in the hearts of his hearers, He speaks from that standpoint and for that reason speaks of God as Father which He can be only of His own dear children.

This needs to be considered since there is nowadays a widespread glorification of the Sermon on the Mount as the basis of true religion, so represented that all men, the heathen included, can join in it, provided they do but make up their minds to that purpose. This view disregards regeneration in its true meaning. This is the modern spirit which conjures with the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man. This is, however, not based on the Scriptures, and is not true Christianity.

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This kind of religion is Ethicalism—the religion of the natural man, based on his deeds, which can indeed get so far as to recognize beautiful ideals but is unable to inaugurate the power for their attainment. This kind does not recognize the depravity of human nature; it holds to man's inherent ability to do what God may reasonably ask him to do. Sin is not so serious but what doing the common duties and amenities of life will insure eternal life. The blood of Christ is not regarded as necessary for the atonement of sin. There men are justifying themselves by their works and do so on the basis of the Sermon on the Mount. Because that discourse holds ethics high, they make it the basis of saving faith through their injection of the assumption of man's natural ability to perform saving good.

Reconciliation with God through sacrifices as the indispensable basis of true religion is indeed recognized in the Sermon on the Mount. And the method of this reconciliation is at least broadly hinted at: the altar is twice mentioned: in Matt. 5:24, 25. Though the Sermon on the Mount was delivered in the days of the shadows, and the fulness of salvation through the atoning blood of Christ was not yet come, nevertheless "all the blood of beasts, on Jewish altars slain" was not regarded merely as a crude device consonant with barbarous by-gone ages. This is a great mistake of the Modernists, whence we must understand the reference to the altar in the light of the Divine intention and method of instruction. The altar was to bring reconciliation through the blood shed there; that also implied the right disposition of heart. The entire discourse presupposes the presence of the regenerate heart, and by the fruits this will become evident (Matt. 7:20). This is decisive from Matt. 5:23, 24; for, if any bring a gift to the altar and believes he

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has the new nature but is at odds with his brother, he is to prove this by seeking reconciliation with his brother. Otherwise all his praying of "Lord, Lord" will avail him nothing, and will but show he is not born of God.

The Sermon on the Mount is the highest interpretation of the Law. The natural man never kept it, nor can he truly keep it under the most favorable help of culture and civilization. All mankind comes short of the glory of God, and consequently stands condemned before the undiminished demands of Divine righteousness and holiness. Hence the Sermon on the Mount cannot possibly be the basis of universal religion with the idea that merely as such it will become a means of adjudging worthy of eternal life. It can do no more than the Law of Moses did, or than any scheme invented by man to gain favor with God.

This becomes the more evident when we carefully distinguish between the two uses of the Law, generally recognized in Christian theology; namely, first, as a means of condemnation and so as a tutor to lead to Christ; and secondly, as a rule of life whereby man must order his conduct before God and man. Its latter use is possible of partial accomplishment only in the case of the regenerate, for "even the holiest in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience; yet so, that with earnest purpose they begin to live, not only according to some, but according to all the commandments of God" (Heid. Cat. Qu. 114).

Finally. The Sermon on the Mount is the Law of the Kingdom. We will not enter into the vexed question of determining what the phrase means; as to just what is meant by its presence or coming, its constitution and circumstances. It is enough to know that since the Law of God is eternal and never abrogated, it applies to-day.

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In the Sermon on the Mount the references are constantly to present sinful surroundings, temptations, imperfections, externalism, anxiety, materialism, and our Lord offers us very pertinent and striking directions for their composure.

It must be evident that so many men of ability have entirely forgotten themselves in proposing to make the Sermon on the Mount the basis of true Christianity. They do it so confidently! But that is the penalty of having a theology based on a false principle. All must go wrong; whence any shining appearance will be grasped at with feverish delight. And the self-contradiction of it! The Modernist who prides himself with such supreme satisfaction that he has made an advance upon the theology of the Reformation, has actually gone back to pre-Christian times, to a religion of "Hebraistic legalism". And he has followed in the track of the Pharisees in this way that they have not seen the spiritual significance of all the Law and its ceremonials as these point to the only Name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved—yes, saved through the merits of the Cross! Saved "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). Aye, worse than that, as the Modernist has stripped even this deeper significance of the Jewish Dispensation of its real objective, he is holding a sort of religion which is pagan and gives forth light only, as, like the moon, the light of Christianity shines *upon* it.

CHAPTER XI

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

It is a very strange thing that this question should have been asked so often. It certainly seems inexcusable to ask this question in these last decades, but in them it has been asked with even greater insistence. It would seem that *some great ignorance*, or *some great wilfulness* is at the bottom of such an anomalous situation. Somehow people have been unable or unwilling to see eye to eye.

One very important point that enters into the difficulty is whether Christianity is a doctrine or a life, a set of dogmas or a fine spirit.

The fact must be honestly faced that, put this way, *we are placed before a false antithesis*. Nevertheless the changes are rung upon it without end, even by the wisest of men. The matter must be faced with sterling integrity, with a consuming wish to learn the truth and abide by it.

The undeniable fact is simply that Christianity is *both* a doctrine *and* a life. If it is to be conceived of as doctrine *only*, making it mere intellectualism, cold and lifeless in its operation, then we orthodox insist as strongly as the liberal that this is the corpse of Christianity and may almost as well be buried. But on the other hand, let the liberal know that such a thing as a life without doctrine is also impossible: we can do very little with abstractions; we certainly cannot live on them. The liberals themselves base whatever form of Christianity

they have upon *doctrine*. If they did not, they could not be distinguished from the pious Buddhist, or from some sweet-tempered infidel. What are the doctrines of the Liberals? They believe in the historic Jesus; his life and influence; they believe in a God of love; in the goodness of the heart; in certain values which reside in the histories of the Bible and its teachings. This is enough to show that in this respect the orthodox and the Liberal stand on one common platform of needing *some* basis for their religion.

Said a very orthodox man: "Christianity and dogmas are not identical. Christianity is wider than dogmas. But dogmas, we maintain, are a vital part of our religion. Granted that Christianity is more than dogmas, but if we have a good and grand view of the doctrines of Christianity we have a great deal and the rest will follow" (Steffens). Our Liberals should be more considerate than to give the impression as if all orthodox views are a mere "mouthing of creeds", etc. There may be some truth to this formal aspect of the matter in a few cases; but this never can be general. Besides, true candor requires that the formal aspect of such a matter should not be unduly pressed, and that, rather, the far more important material side of the matter receive all attention; for upon this the real issue hinges. And to begin with, there should be an end to confusing the issues by means of arguing to a false antithesis. This will get us nowhere.

What then is Christianity? Broadly speaking the orthodox say, for instance: "Christianity is a particular religion, specifically different all other religions; that it received its specific content once and for all from Christ and His Apostles; and that this content has received authoritative expression in the New Testament. Still further, they hold that the great historical facts recorded

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in the New Testament, such as the death and resurrection of Christ, and the interpretation of these facts which it contains, are equally constituent elements of this content. Apart from these facts there would be no Christianity; but give the facts an interpretation other than that of the New Testament, and they do not give us Christianity" (*The Presbyterian*).

What is Christianity from the standpoint of the Modernist? "Modernism is a non-theological scientific application of the teaching and life of Jesus to twentieth century affairs" (Shailer Mathews). New Testament historical references and ideas play their part in this, but they are allowed a wide latitude of interpretation as to their origin, their intrinsic value or bearing upon salvation. The cultured and scientific mind of man sits in judgment upon the truth and the value of these things.

It will be seen that the inquiry as to what Christianity is narrows down to a question of interpretation of the New Testament literature. We must choose between two methods of interpretation which flow forth from two radically different principles, as we have set forth in detail in our Third Chapter. We shall not repeat this, except to say that if the Liberal principle is consistently carried out it will largely destroy the facts, the bases of Christianity, and with it must go its spirit which inheres in the facts as they are presented in the New Testament. And we must remind our readers once more that a fine spirit may long survive among people who have become Modernists or even worse, despite their disaffection with regard to the origin of these: the reflex influence of the best kind of Christianity will long blossom forth after its roots have been cut off.

To the question: What is Christianity? we would reply that it is based upon a revelation from heaven which is

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recorded in the Holy Scriptures through the agency of the Holy Spirit; these Scriptures furnish the complex of doctrine which bear upon the redemption of mankind from sin; they are applied by the Holy Spirit of grace and power to the believing heart, which receives spiritual life and is thus enabled to bring forth the fruits which are well-pleasing to a holy God. We acknowledge that the apprehension of these doctrines may vary in extent, and that the power of the Holy Spirit in transforming lives may differ in intensity; but both these elements must in some degree be in evidence to render one a Christian, and to show forth what Christianity is.

In these particulars the Modernist will not agree, according to the degree in which the rationalistic poison has infected him. "Nothing is more characteristic at least of the thorough-going Modernist than his hostility to supernaturalism and his friendliness to naturalness of thought and sentiment. As Bavinck puts it: 'The religious supernaturalistic world-view has universally prevailed among all peoples and ages down to the present day, and only in the last hundred and fifty years has given way in some circles to the empirico-scientific' To us that which is most distinctive of the religious Modernist is his rejection of the principle of external authority — it wants to trust in spirit" (*The Presbyterian*).

What is the reason that the outspoken Liberal balks at these things? The answer is given in I Cor. 1:23-29. "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For behold your calling, brethren,

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that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea, and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are; that no flesh should glory before God." There is something about the rationalistic spirit that will not bow to Divine authority; it loves human judgment; it places faith in its own efforts, in works of righteousness that it has done. It glories in its own wisdom. In The Netherlands the Liberals used to call themselves without hesitation, the "thinking part of humanity". And one of our chief Liberal organs said: "Liberal Christianity makes no headway among coarse, uneducated and unthinking people. Its necessary condition of success is a public professing something beyond the average amount of culture, intellectually and morally."

Is it not overweening presumption to make such statements? Must we actually believe that such very learned, cultured logical minds, as Patton, Warfield, Thornwell, Dabney in America, and Kuyper and Bavinck in The Netherlands, not to mention numerous others, are so blind as to be held down by views which should be seen as such if so evidently inferior? May we dare say, without wishing in the least to be presumptuous, that the evidence from such men placed at the disposal of the reader in this book, should at least give respect for their views and should lead to a candid examination of the orthodox position, whether this position, the anchor-sheet of the saints in all ages, is not the very rock of confidence, in as much as power has gone forth from

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these very circles, whilst Rationalism has had very little to show for?

In support of their claims Liberals have pointed confidently to the "Christianity of Jesus". A typical view of it appears in an editorial in *Christian Work* of Nov. 3, 1923. "The essence of the difficulty between Fundamentalists and Modernists is that their modes of thought run in different planes, their ideas in some cases are incommensurate. The older thought generation holds the form to be the essential thing; the newer generation is concerned with the force within, however the form may vary." Then Dr. Patton's definition of Christianity is quoted: "Christianity is a supernatural revelation of a way of salvation from sin through the incarnation and blood-shedding of the Son of God." Said editorial then asks: "Does that definition comply with Jesus' own definition of religion? Again and again we must bid those who want to know what Christianity is, to turn back to the Gospels, above all to those Gospels which give us the picture of Jesus most directly [they are anxious to throw out the Gospel according to John], with the least transmission of His personality through other minds." Now, reader, do you not see how this whole Modernist scheme is based upon private judgment, and that it could not stand if the whole of Scripture were received? They do not proceed from the Scripture principle of authority, but from the Rationalistic. Hence, to gain their point, they rest their case upon the Gospels only; nay, upon *some* of the Gospels; and even then they receive them in so far as these may happen to give the picture of Jesus in the way that suits them. And they are anxious to get rid of Paul, of whom the editorial says: "We all know that the particular cast of Paul's interpretation of Christianity came from the circum-

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stances of his own life, from the atmosphere of the thinking of the Jew and Greek—and Roman—in the first century of our era. He knew surely that in the way of Christ was the hope of the world; there was the seed of the new life, the real resurrection. When he rose to his highest, as in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, he fairly sang the message of Jesus Christ. That chapter is as true to the mind of God, we may venture to say, as is the fifth chapter of Matthew. But men do not think any longer in some of the terms in which Paul thought." We ask in reply, Is it fair to rest Christianity upon the "Christianity of Jesus"? By what good reason can we expect the full elaboration of the counsel of God for the redemption of the world in a time when all the great deeds to achieve this were still future? When Jesus himself had said that all was yet to be fulfilled, and that greater things were to be revealed by the Holy Spirit after he should have departed? The Modernist must be very careful to remember that Jesus lived in the days of "types and the shadows"? In his life-time very few of the great facts of redemption had come to their glorious fruition. The Cross, the resurrection, the ascension, Pentecost had not yet cast their splendor upon the full course of the counsel of God for the salvation of mankind. The Epistles of Paul had not yet been written, these great intellectual achievements, insomuch that it has been said that never were profounder productions written than the Epistles of Paul to the Romans and the Ephesians. All these were necessary to show in heightened measure the "breath and length and height and depth of the knowledge of the love of Christ which passeth understanding".

But even then as it was, *this* may be said for the "Christianity" of Jesus that his presentation of religion

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was not a mere altruism; nor did he require salvation by works; he recognized the necessity of the sacrificial system; he insisted most emphatically upon the regeneration of the heart by the Holy Spirit; He directed to Himself as the only way of salvation, requiring penitence for sin and faith in Himself; He must Himself be "lifted up" that so salvation should come; He believed in eternal life and in eternal death; etc. Furthermore, there are no traces of the Modernist idea as if Jesus should have made a difference between form and essence. On the contrary. Jesus received all of the Old Testament in as real and straightforward a way as the orthodox do. There is nothing "incommensurate" between the planes of thought in which Jesus lived and concerning which He taught than the orthodox view it. There is the most natural accord.

Thinking of the essence and nature of Christianity one naturally wants to know what is fundamental, characteristic. Opinions vary these days. We think it worth while to take the trouble to examine at some length a short editorial of *The Christian Century* of Sept. 6, 1923. Quotation marks will indicate our use of the words of said editorial. "Most religious people wish to learn and to observe the fundamentals of religion. They seek the kernel rather than the husk. But the real question is, What are the fundamentals of Christianity? A list of them has been dogmatically set forth by a conservative group in this country, with no reference at all to any induction of the facts. Shall Old Testament conceptions of sin and salvation take precedence over those of the New Testament?" We answer: In both Testaments sin is held up as a horrid thing, deserving the penalty of a righteous judge; and in both Testaments it is constantly judged as worthy of death—as it is; whence the Divine

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righteousness is never compromised, but in the sacrifice of the typical lamb as well as in the great Antitype occurred the greatest dénouement of the ages:

“Mercy and truth are met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other”
(Psa. 85:10).

The orthodox do not believe in a characterless, one-sided God, but One in whom the whole complex of the attributes of love and justice coalesce.

“Shall the man of today treat the Scripture in a way entirely different from that of Jesus himself?” Certainly not. Jesus was very emphatic about recognizing the Old Testament, so that “one jot or one tittle of the law would in no wise pass away till all things be accomplished”: sooner would “heaven and earth pass away”. If the editorial had in mind Matt. 5:21, 27, 33, 38, 43 it labors under the mistake of so many Modernists in thinking that Jesus objected to some part of the Old Testament, whereas he was speaking of interpretations of the Scribes.

“The fundamentals of the Christian religion as agreed upon by Jesus and Paul are not the fundamentals that are most stressed by modern fundamentalists.” Jesus stressed a number of things which are surely not to the liking of Modernists; and Paul mentions ever so many more of these. But probably the editorial really had in mind what follows: “Jesus asserts that the first and great commandment of the law is to love God. Paul said: ‘Now abideth faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love’”. The language of Jesus is actually quoted from the Old Testament. It means that the root out of which true piety proceeds is love to God and man. Both Jesus and Paul make love fundamental of piety

and ethical quality. However, there is danger in being too absolute in stressing an emphasis. By doing so we are sure to run up contradictions. To conclude, e.g., that the requirement of love to man is greater than the command to repent in order to be saved, would be a case in point. Relative values and proportions must ever be held in mind if we would be true exegetes of Scripture—or of civil law. Incidentally, this circumstance proves how necessary it is, if we would understand Scripture and apprehend its general significance, to have a comprehensive, well-correlated view of the whole: this is exactly what systematic theology has in mind. It is the glory of Reformed theology (so much decried as “theology”, as “dogma”, etc.), that it has done this in the most consistent and satisfactory manner. But what is the tendency today? To present an atomistic, superficial, off-hand performance. Thus the Modernist will glibly quote that text of 1 Cor. 13:13 as the acme of theological wisdom rendering needless any further thought. But this is too simple to be true. Paul speaks of an indispensable root of this root with which we must reckon; thus: “because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who hath been given unto us” (Rom. 5:5). The Modernist quotes these texts of Jesus and Paul as if they warrant the idea that love, such as the moral individual is able on his own account to show, is “the greatest thing in the world”: he ignores the general trend of Scripture by so teaching, forgetting that it is “not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5). Only when this has happened will we be able in some degree to keep this “great commandment of the law” to “love God”.

The editorial continues: “The faith that is so much

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exalted in the teaching of Paul is no mere mouthing of intellectual creeds." Certainly not! What makes *The Christian Century* say such an obvious thing? The obsession of prejudice against Creeds and against the carefully constructed and well formulated systems bringing out the full wealth of the Sacred Word is so great as to evoke a torrent of belittling judgments which are unworthy of men who boast culture and scientific poise of mind. All these gratuitous intimations are a terrible injustice to the orthodox who claim to fear the Lord and tremble at His Word.

Again: "The question asked in the New Testament church was not, What do you believe? but, In whom do you believe? In shifting the object of faith from a person to a dogma, the fundamentalists have themselves departed from a fundamental of New Testament Christianity." Oh, how tired such assertion and reasoning makes one! Is there no broadminded grasp of things any more? Can that be so, that the orthodox shift their faith from a person to a dogma? What strange hallucinations dogmaphobia produces! Is then dogma such a terrible thing? What is it, pray? Simply a well-defined expression of what a thing or person is. To have faith in the person of Christ I must know who he is; the better I know this, the more intelligently and satisfactory to the heart will be my relation to Him. When Christ asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" they informed Him what dogmas obtained among the people. When the Savior asked what *they* thought about Him, Peter answered most dogmatically: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God!" And our Lord praised him for such good theology. When Philip preached to the eunuch he preached dogmatically to him concerning the person and

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deeds of the Messiah. And Philip's confession of faith on which he was baptized was also dogmatic as it expressed his conception of the quality and power of the Son of God: it may have been short, but it included more elements than lay at the surface. Even to the orthodox Christianity is not an exercise in mental attainment, but the rich expanses of Divine truth becomes a means unto the great end to know God, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, which is eternal life (John 17:3). But the Modernist, as far as he believes in Christ, also does this dogmatically, injecting such elements into his conception of him as seemeth good to him.

Again: "The world of today truly wants to know what the religion of Jesus is." Ah, yes! Oh, how this world of today is to be pitied! It needs this religion of Jesus more than ever, and it is getting it less, and then in adulterated and poisoned form! As he has departed from the Scripture principle of the Reformation the Modernist cannot be expected to bring the world the true gospel—the strong evangelical appeals to repentance and faith which made the Presbyterians and Baptists and Methodists of old mighty to the bringing in of souls into the Kingdom, being notoriously absent today. In the words of the Sermon on the Mount, of which the Modernist boasts as the real and sufficient program of Christianity, we read—and it applies to him: "Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent?" (Matt. 7:9, 10). Modernists actually give stones and serpents to a hungry world.

A confession concludes the short editorial: "The fundamentalists have failed to set it forth"; —yes, we acknowledge that with all our privileges we have not

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come up to the fulness of our duty to our fellow man and the honor of God, but we feel assured we were true, as far as we went, to His Word. "Sometimes liberals have equally failed, through flippancy of mind and through their too common habit of negation." We believe that the constant verdict of Church History writes in big letters FAILURE over every form of Rationalism, and it will apply according to the degree of its viciousness and error. Certainly the critic of God's Word is apt to be flippant when he dares take issue with the Truth of the Everblessed God. His view is a negation of Christianity. It denies the supernatural, and with it the power which comes down from above is denied. Having denied all this the sanctions of morality will disappear. Dr. Francis L. Patton has trenchantly remarked: "In its last analysis the new Christianity is a complete surrender of the supernatural. And the surrender of the supernatural is the surrender of obligatory morality itself, save as it is enforced by the sanctions of affection, by the jealous care a man has for his own interests, by fear of social ostracism, by the sheriff and the shotgun."

What then is Christianity? If the question is so taken as equivalent to saying, Who will be saved? we would answer it in various ways according to the point of view from which one can consider it. In its deepest sense we believe according to the Scriptures: "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). If you bring the matter down to the absolute personal quality, we answer in the language of the Savior Himself: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Since the Holy Spirit applies the merits of the redemption in Christ where, how and

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when He will, this bars any necessary construction of a doctrine of infant damnation which least of all can be said of the Reformed view of the truth, but who are the very ones to whom this harsh doctrine is slanderously imputed. Further: If the matter of salvation be brought down into the domain of consciousness and personal experience, then we answer that those will be saved who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But here we find difficulties enough. In how far and how truly one believes in Jesus who without contrition and in a perfunctory manner thinks of him, making Him only an example to be imitated as occasion may offer, it is not for us to say: this, God only knows, the searcher of hearts; and it would be well that the person concerned also earnestly search his own heart whether he truly has an interest in the salvation procured upon the Cross.

Hence, when our churches receive people into membership they cannot go much beyond some sort of a credible profession of faith. And so, when we are speaking of Christianity, we must beware of identifying the real as it is known unto God with the appearances as we have to deal with. They that find fault with Christianity can make two mistakes in the matter: they may often consider as Christian what is only apparently such, or they may overlook and fail to see what is Christian as they have no access to the deep recesses of the heart and the conscience. All these considerations conspire to give some difficulty in answering the question: "Fundamental? Pray, as to what?"

When certain Churches insist that their ministers shall subscribe to their Standards, to uphold and defend them, this is not meant to mean that salvation is limited to the pale of these churches; for they recognize that God has His elect among Roman Catholics and in all Protestant

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denominations. It is an inexcusable blunder that the Presbyterian Church has been represented as making subscription to, and belief in the truth of its Standards as a test for eternal life. No; we have our Standards as a measure for good order. They invite all those who can with us believe in the peculiar excellence of our Standards, to join our spiritual household. If they are of a different mind, and would serve the Lord Christ under other regulations, they are free to do so, and are bid God-speed: they are brethren in Christ all the same. "Good fences make good neighbors".

Are Modernists Christians? Will they be saved? Since Rationalism is a system of infinite variety and degrees of strength, running all the way from the rankest denial of the verities of Christianity to the mildest forms of evangelical convictions, it is not easy to draw the line. But this is the contention of the orthodox that it is best, safest to have such a view of the doctrines of Christianity as best comports with the design and the contents of the Word. We believe that strict regard to the Scripture principle of the Reformation is the path of safety, and that the deviation therefrom on the part of the Modernist, though perhaps done in good faith, is a dangerous venture which may lead them where they do not expect to arrive. We cannot but believe that the Holy Spirit will peculiarly own real loyalty to His Word, and the cardinal doctrines as they are to the mind of the Spirit, and as the orthodox believe they have apprehended them. There is a pungent power to the doctrines of the holiness and righteousness of God who is terribly angry with sin, there is power in the blood which atones for such sin, the sovereignty of divine grace and the freeness of the gift of salvation apart from works of righteousness that we have done—these doctrines and so many more have availed to win

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notable conquests for the Kingdom of Grace, such as the Modernist cannot boast of. The run down church must needs call in the old-time fiery evangelist who is freely to preach in the terms of the old gospel, in order to win over the power of sin and to discomfit the devil and the world.

To stand for these things is not to fight "sham battles on ancient fields". The enemy is moving on faster against the Christian phalanx and finding weaker spots for successful entrance on account of the Modernist self-assurance that all is well, that we must love peace and leave things as they are with sweet indulgence, meanwhile throwing away our sword which is the Word of God. They say that we are to think of the "primacy of the spirit and the spiritual". Indeed, we are doing that by our very insistence upon the facts of Scripture which set forth the reality of an Incarnation, which incontestably teaches the Virgin Birth, which insists upon the necessity of blood-shedding, which demands, as the very truth of Christianity stands or falls with it (1 Cor. 15: passim), the bodily resurrection and return of Christ. We cannot live on abstracted evaporations. When the Modernist moves away from the integrity of the Word, and forsakes the only valid principle of authority, he is treading on dangerous ground. If we are not to sink into a bottomless mysticism we must rest upon the revelation of God, and to this the Holy Spirit will bear witness. The Modernist can simulate a fine spiritual fervor, but whiskey can do that too. People call for that which is 'vital'. The Holy Spirit gives life, and He does it by means of that Word which He inspired. The words which the Holy Spirit speaks are like the words which the Savior spoke: "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63) "For the

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Word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). When the orthodox insists upon the particular interpretations of certain great doctrines, he should not be blamed, for God is very particular about it, and truth is exceedingly particular, aye, it is most intolerant. Feeling that we have most solid ground under foot when we fully accept the Reformed principle of authority, and deriving in consequence thereof all these great doctrinal truths which are characteristic of Reformed theology, and beholding their power in the lives of persons and peoples, our answer to the question as what is Christianity is given in pointing to the wonderful complex of doctrines as set forth in our Standards and as witnessed to by the Holy Spirit. "We have either to go on this journey of negation and doubt to the very bottomless pit of despair or we have to retrace our steps, and go back and back, until we rehabilitate Paul and give him his ancient place, and back and back until we come to atoning blood!" (F. L. Patton).

CHAPTER XII

THE MINISTRY OF THE DIVINE WORD

The Scripture principle of the Reformation has a particular bearing upon the manner and the extent of bringing the revelation of God to mankind. If this revelation as set forth in the Holy Scriptures is authoritative, its ministration is determined thereby. The Epistle to the Hebrews points the way. "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son" (1:1, 2). Jesus spake significantly unto Philip: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. . . . Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself, but the Father abiding in me doeth his works" (John 14:9, 10). In Christ men saw and heard God, and in Him the divine revelation, in its critical aspects, was completed. The Savior who had received all authority in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28:18) commissioned his Apostles to preach the Gospel to every creature. They had in their possession the facts of the fulfillment of God's counsel of Grace, and the Holy Spirit was promised them besides to lead them into all truth. That is to say, the Holy Spirit would guide them in the elaboration of what Christ had come to do and to teach in bringing God's revelation to a climax. And this self-same Holy Spirit, who had moved men of old to speak from God, so giving the world the Old Testament, could again be expected, according to this

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promise, to move upon the Apostles in order that the counsel of God might reach its highest objective. This revelation of God is highest authority even as any one would accord authority to any living word spoken from His mouth direct from the heavens. And whoever is called to engage in bringing the content of this revelation to mankind is in Scripture called a "minister". The Greek word for it in the New Testament (*diákonos*) signifies *servant, attendant, minister*. Thus Paul often called himself a "minister" of Jesus Christ, saying e. g., in 2 Cor. 3:6 that God had "made him sufficient as a minister of the new covenant". Luke calls himself with others who believe and to whom the message of salvation was entrusted "ministers of the Word" (Luke 1:1). In Acts 6:4 the Twelve declare: "But we will continue stedfastly in prayer, and in the Ministry of the word".

It is generally thought that the specific task of the ministry is to save souls, whence he is conventionally and by preference called a "minister of the Gospel". But first of all it must be noted that the word 'gospel' in Scripture is of wider import than the common impression of the word has made it. According to the Scriptures the gospel and its preaching reached back into the Old Testament, namely: "Seeing therefore it remaineth that some should enter thereinto, and that they to whom the gospel was before preached failed to enter in because of disobedience" (Heb. 4:6). "For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them" (Heb. 4:2). Of course, this "preaching of the gospel" to these ancient Israelites was done in quite a different way than obtains among those who preach so-called "gospel sermons". The word 'gospel' must therefore not be restricted to something specific, but it must embrace all of God's gracious purposes on behalf of a ruined world to which in many

forms and ways, "by divers portions and in divers manners" (Heb. 1:1), the Divine compassion manifested itself. Hence the full idea of the word 'gospel' is very nearly equivalent with God's revelation of His grace with which all Scripture is instinct. Indeed, all of Scripture has a predominantly *gracious* side to it, otherwise God would never have had anything to do with a race which rebelled against Him and is so insistent in maintaining that rebellious spirit: surely, to have exercised such good-will towards man is an exhibition of mercy and grace which is beyond all comprehension.

In setting forth, then, in the Old Testament and in the New, the desperate nature of sin, its awful fruits, the Divine forbearance and wisdom in dealing with the situation, we behold the unfolding of the "counsel of God". To fully understand it in all its import and relations we need all of Scripture. Whoever then feels himself called to labor in the Lord's vineyard has to take careful account of this and may not proceed on his own estimations and select what may appeal to his private fancy, but he must remember that he is dealing with the "counsel of God". That counsel is objectively given in the Holy Scriptures and they who bring this in its full content and in obedience to its specific demands are Ministers of the Word. The old-fashioned designation of the office was *Verbi Dei Minister*, abbreviated into V. D. M., and thus often appended to the name of the officer as his distinctive title. It is a good one: the designation is most Scriptural and accurately indicates the nature and scope of the office. It were well that emphasis were again laid upon the term as it so well expresses the quality and the range of the work of the Christian minister. Much loose thinking and practice on this score obtains nowadays. A low valuation has

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been set upon the sacred office. And in this the clergy are themselves largely to blame in being too anxious to cater to the prejudices of the people, to curry the favor of the world.

We must therefore repeat the very important fact that a correct apprehension of the Reformed principle of authority must have due regard for God's revelation as a whole. If all Scripture comes to us with divine authority, then of course the work of the ministry must take into strict account the entire range of the truth as embodied in the Divine revelation. Paul so states the fact and gives the purpose of this revelation. "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Remember that this text particularly refers to the Old Testament. And of course the words of the Apostle are true in fully as great a measure in regard to the New Testament. This makes all Scriptures one complete whole, every part of it indispensable, as all of it offers some aspect or other of the counsel of God. The Word speaks of the glory and the grace of God from beginning to end; of abhorrence of sin and its certain judgment. It all speaks of the way unto life through the blood of the atonement. The attributes of the Divine Being appear consistent with each other in both the Testaments. The same eternal destinies loom up in both the Dispensations.

We must therefore not interpret the ministry of the Word in too narrow a sense as if its only real and worthwhile work is to bring the unsaved to faith in Christ. For "it is said it is the task of the Church to win souls but not to put believers in a dogmatical straitjacket. Is it

not true that some of our brethren who are carried away by such talk, ask us, that the Church of Christ has to win souls? Certainly, but is the Church nothing else than a society for the evangelization of the masses? There is a higher and safer standpoint than to be guided by the maxim of winning souls. We have to glorify God in this world. We have to do this not only by winning souls, however important this may be, but also by learning to know Him in the fulness of His glory" (Steffens). Man's chief end is to glorify God. In this high purpose of the Divine counsel the remedial element stands in its own relation to the praise of God's virtues, and has its own place in the manifold works of God's power. The Minister of the Word therefore is to unfold the excellencies of God's attributes and works; of His glory in creation and providence; of His dealings with nations and times. And as respects the welfare of the individual the Minister of the Word is used of God to make him aware of his guilt, to point him to the cross, and to assure him of the divine pardon. But even in doing this last for the individual, he is only *introduced* into the rich heritage of grace; there is much more to be done in following up the good work begun by the Holy Spirit. The tender plant of grace must be nurtured; it must be strengthened; it must be fortified against the danger of relapse; the rescued sinner must be built up. The latter expression "built up" opens up a world of possibilities. In ministering to the Word of God the riches of grace can be unfolded with ever greater effect in the lives of the saints. Paul prayed "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and

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grounded in love, may be strong to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:16-19). Even more marvelous is the fact of its not being exhausted in this world, for Paul also says: "that *in the ages to come* He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7). How this sublime office is degraded when its topics turn to the trivial affairs of this world!

The office of the Minister of the Word will, therefore, be viewed in quite a different light as this is done from the Reformed or from the Rationalist standpoint in its variations. As the emphasis is placed upon the *object* which is to be dealt with, namely the Word, the Reformed must regard it with sublime awe as being the wonder-work of God the Holy Spirit. To the Reformed theologian it is the subdued effulgence of the divine glory as the Person of Christ was this on earth. To the orthodox that Word speaks heavenly wisdom on the greatest questions of life and thought. Here are the clues to a divine philosophy of all things which does not involve self-contradiction nor needs to be revised and readjusted as all humanborn systems have been. To the Rationalist the Bible is but Hebrew literature, written indeed by men of great genius; but this literature betrays crude conceptions of God and relates stories which are a great strain upon the better judgment of the enlightened mind. Of course, the Reformed, having so high an estimation of the Word as Divine in character, put an emphasis upon the word *minister* which makes him entirely dependent upon and subordinate to this Word: he "trembles" at the Word of God. He bows to the majesty and the authority of what God gave as His

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very own, and it is for him faithfully and unquestionably to dispense it. The Modernist, on the other hand, presumes to amend it and take issue with it. Instead of being a *minister* of the Word he is the scholarly thinker who feels himself perfectly competent to pass on its quality; *he* can decide what is worthy of divinity; *he* dares ask: "What doest THOU?"

It is remarkable that however the Bible be viewed, it is a book which has engaged the full powers of the greatest intellects for its interpretation. This very fact requires of anyone who would in any wise administer the Word, that he should do justice to it. It will not do to pick up at random some glittering object that lies on the surface, but this mine of precious stones and minerals should be explored, its various treasures brought to the surface, assorted and treated to get each in its own kind. Too much of superficial method and snap-judgment has been accorded the Scriptures by those who pose as ministers of the Word. The great truths do not lie at the surface but need to be gathered, assorted and assimilated with painstaking care. God is not doing things in cut-and-dried, mechanical ways, but His way is the processes of life which are complex and rich in content, and will reward the arduous effort of the delighted and amazed explorer. This is the curse of our times that whereas scientists and lawyers excel in profound investigations and clear-cut statements, our theologians who have to deal with even higher things offer a crazy variety of half-cooked ideas, superficial platitudes, bizarre construction of doctrines and a straining after novelty and sensationalism. What is prized in the eminent minds of the bar, thoroughness and accuracy, due regard to the bright minds which thought before them, this is howled down in the theologian with the

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cries of "dogma!" "theology!" "traditionalist!" The superficial minister of the Word is like an uncultured foreman of construction who lays down brick after brick and does not perceive the magnificence of the entire building. As a child admires the sailing soap-bubbles, so the minister of the word who offers an anecdote or two and some striking remark on things indifferent to the seriousness of life, entirely misses the purpose of his high calling. While men are famishing for the bread of life he is feeding them on vanity and vacuity. While the sword of the Divine judgment hangs trembling over the souls of men, this preacher of the world intimates that there is no need of uneasiness. And it is no wonder that educated men and women absent themselves very largely from divine services, not altogether perhaps because they are unconverted, but also, likely, because they get nothing that appeals to them as a forceful and dignified presentation. In this age of superficiality and ignorance of the Scriptures the Modernist with his easier conceptions of things, his deference to what human judgment readily accepts, is carrying almost everything before him. The ministers of the Word have not been feeding the people from the strong meat of the Word; they have themselves lost the taste for it; and instead have been feeding the people with that which is not bread. And thus neglected large numbers have become the easy prey of all sorts of vagaries which seemed to offer real spiritual nutriment; and it has actually been obtained in ways which are not altogether safe for the full development of the spiritual man but still gave satisfaction in an immediate need.

While the Reformed rejoice in the wealth of the Divine revelation the Modernist has made himself poor according to the degree in which he carries out his

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principle. Because of these degrees we may seem to be unjust to moderate Liberals but they should carefully consider how they stand on an inclined plane where the next deviation downwards is easily taken. Therefore, once more, as the Modernist has given up the Reformed principle of authority, he does not realize how poor he has made himself. For him the objective basis with its strength is gone; there is left a limited—as limited as he wants to make it—range of ideas which are construed according to his own conceptions. He stands on the subjective basis which necessarily must be as various as their conceptions of it. There is left to them a limited range of facts of doubtful necessary values. An editorial by Dr. F. Lynch in *Christian Work* of Oct. 27, 1923, is characteristic. He insists that it is the duty of the Church to preach the Gospel—the Gospel only. The Apostles did no more. And this consists in the proclamation of certain historical incidents in the life of Jesus. His kindly deeds and winsome words, his death and resurrection—a few bare facts—and how much these Modernists disagree amongst each other as to what is authentic and how far the significance of the life and words of Jesus may extend! What is really significant about the person of Christ, what character His deeds and words really exhibited, why his death availed to reconcile unto God, what his resurrection meant, if indeed there was a physical resurrection—all these things must be avoided. The unsearchable riches of grace inherent in all these things must be ignored. How unworthy such views and methods are of intelligent men, who in any other walk of life will insist upon tracing out the beauties and the values of all kinds of objects of knowledge. As highly as a painstaking examination of things physical, mental, economic, etc., is praised in the man of intelligence and culture, so

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severely is this very attitude towards the wisdom of God frowned upon. With how poor a Gospel that leaves us! What a pitiful conception of the greatest vocation on earth, the Ministry of the Divine Word! And what must these Modernists do to evade the demands of the high office? For one thing they take issue with the Master Himself in decrying the Old Testament on which our Lord set such high value. Says Dr. Lynch: "And what has any theory of the Old Testament got to do with the Gospel? Christ established a Church, gave it a Gospel, sent it out into the world to preach it. He did not give it the Old Testament. There was no Old Testament. He never told them it was their authority. Indeed, He often told them that He superseded it. 'Ye have heard it saidbut I say' ". What contradictions of the Savior Himself (John 5:39; Matt. 5:17-19; etc.). And our Lord had not the text of the Old Testament in mind in the 'but I say': He referred to private rabbinical misinterpretation. To what poverty a man dooms himself who surrenders the only sound and fruitful principle of authority. He is no longer a Minister of the Divine Word, but a setter forth of human private views.

The typical Modernist view of Christianity appears in an editorial in *Christian Work* of Nov. 3, 1923. "The essence of the difference between Fundamentalists and Modernists is that their modes of thought run in different planes, their ideas in some cases are incommensurate. . . . The older thought generation holds the form to be the essential thing; the newer generation is concerned with the force within, however the form may vary." It then quotes Dr. F. L. Patton's definition of Christianity. "Christianity is a supernatural revelation of a way of salvation from sin through the incarnation and bloodshedding of the Son of God." And the editorial then

asks: "Does that definition comply with Jesus' own idea of religion? Again and again we must bid those who want to know what Christianity is, to turn back to the Gospels, above all to those Gospels which give us the picture of Jesus most directly, with the least transmission of His personality through other minds. We all know that the particular cast of Paul's interpretation of Christianity came from the circumstances of his own life, from the atmosphere of the thinking of the Jew and Greek—and Roman—in the first century of our era. But may not the modern man expect this of his Fundamentalist brother, that the latter will be ready to accept the Christianity of Jesus, Christianity as it is expressed in the best authenticated words of Jesus?" The ideas of this quotation will be met with in ever so many articles of the more or less advanced Liberal. To preach according to this view is no longer to be a Minister of the Word; it is to be the Minister of an uncertain personality, the value of whose work must apply uncertainly and as indefinitely to the needs of mankind, as the preacher represents it.

Uncertain? Indefinite? Why, even the "historic Jesus" is a matter of doubt. Not all the Gospels—the only possible accounts of him—can be trusted. What is authentic in the best of them? Even his words have been incorrectly given sometimes. And who may decide what really the spirit of Jesus is when the testimony of the Apostles must be ruled out? Are we going to submit to the authority of the Modernist? Which one? What kind of preaching is that where the facts are so largely chimerical? How different has the character and the *effect* of that preaching been which rested squarely on the basis of the Word in its full range of fact and interpretation! In their case it was the power of God

unto salvation unto every one that believes"—we would add: to everyone that believes in that way and all of the literal fact and finds his soul kindled by the fuel of the divine deeds for him.

And how insistent was the "historic Jesus" himself to appeal to the Old Testament! And how the Apostles "gave the transmission of his personality" through the light of the Old Testament shed upon his person and work! All of Scripture testifies of Him; all of it is needed to understand Him. For to understand Him we must needs know the nature and penalty of sin, its development and history as it culminated in the sacrifice of the Son of God for the guilty. The wealth of divine ideas in the ceremonials of Israel are not negated but *illustrated* by the incarnation and death of our Lord. All of it is of one piece of the counsel of God. There is a profound divine philosophy about it all which cannot dispense with a single link in the chain. He is a poor setter forth of the counsel of God who omits so very much of it. He is like the untrained man visiting an art gallery who admires some picture for a glaring stroke of coloring here and there, and does not take into account all the shades and accessories which constitute to the true artist the glory of the whole. It is a great pity that so many excellent intellects in the ministry, with such a variety of gifts, so many good thinkers and orators, have not devoted themselves to the fulness of the Word of God and would have produced far more profound impressions upon the general public. There has been too much disregard of the Word; too little belief in its true content; and instead of developing this, there has been too much use of Scripture as a mere point of departure, then to proceed to spin out of their own small conceptions of things what a superficial-grown public approves of.

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And how largely must the popular preacher call to his aid the charm of the accessories? The veriest stuff and nonsense can become acceptable to an audience, when the preacher summons to his aid the arts of oratory, of choice language and the spice of some sparkling anecdote. But this is not preaching the Word. The strength and the power of the real men of God lay in other things. They were strong as they wielded the sword of the Spirit, and not in their desire to charm as the harlot does with paint and powder to catch the unwary. Where lay the power of Peter and Paul, of Luther and Calvin, of Wesley and Whitefield, of Finney and Moody, of Spurgeon and Talmage, except it be in their unconditional stand upon the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture? Their work was based on a ground which availed to pull down the strongholds of Satan, to startle the conscience, to issue in that morality which ensures soundness to our personal and national existence.

This is borne out by a curious editorial in *The Christian Century* of Jan. 17, 1924: "Something atavistic works in the churchly mind the moment it begins to consider the task of evangelism. If a minister thinks of calling another minister to his aid in an evangelistic meeting, he almost certainly selects one much more conservative than himself. How much pastors have called in popular evangelists to preach stuff which they would not preach themselves and no longer believe, will be known only in heaven. The list of preachers called by local federations and ministerial bodies to hold forth in the theaters during passion week reveals the same curious tendency. When the man of the street is approached in this special way he is asked to believe something which the religious leaders of the community itself no longer believe and teach, but which long habit has associated with the

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evangelistic habit. How much of biblical infallibility, special providence in the realm of physical nature, blood atonement in a physical sense, and second coming will be preached in Lent again this year? The disaffected but wistful business men of many a city will be threatened by a united Protestantism again this year with a type of doctrine in which three-fourths of the pastors of the city no longer believe. What kind of men will be sent into the colleges this year to speak to students? Will they be of the Sherwood Eddy type, or of another type? Will faith be made as hard as possible for college students, or as rational as possible?" And then *The Christian Century* thinks that the only kind of converts who will in the long run stay by the church must be won in the honest way of the new evangelism! This editorial is an undesigned testimony to the power of divine truth, and we dare say that in the long run the Modernist method of evangelism will bear very little fruit and will fail to move the mighty world into the paths of righteousness and holy living. The rationalism of Germany in the eighteenth century bore only poisonous fruit. The Modernism of the Netherlands which arose in 1855 had only a deadening influence as compared with the mighty movement under Kuyper which for a time gained a majority of the seats in the States General and governed the land. The culture and the liberalism of Germany in these later days have not saved Europe from its bath of blood and economic disaster. And from this direction the seeds of Modernism have come to America and have lately begun to increase at an alarming rate. This land of the Puritan, the Knickerbocker and the Huguenot, from whom have sprang men of sterling worth and heroic mould as founded in the noblest conceptions of liberty and civic righteousness, due to that strength of

character begotten of a recognition of the Divine authority. Now that the poisons of liberalism, self-sufficiency and insubordination have more largely entered the body politic and the church, we have reason to be alarmed for our safety. Civil historians, such as Ferrero, and others, have already forecast the disintegration of our Republic: they have based it on certain evil practices which operated in the downfall of other governments, but they have not gone deep enough to the root of the matter in our case, the forsaking of the fear of God and disregard of His Word as the expression of His authority. A liberal construction of things easily degenerates into license; and this in turn begets anarchy and chaos.

In the midst of the many difficulties into which the world has lately been plunged confessions have been heard from unexpected quarters that the right methods have not been followed and the proper remedies not applied. The cry has gone forth and has been eagerly repeated: "Why not try Christianity?" This sounded very plausible; but, on a little thought, is it not curious that Christianity at this late date has never yet been tried? It is, however, broadly intimated that the ministry all these centuries has not been discharging its duty, and that preaching has been a "parrotting of obsolete phrases and a juggling with the unrealities of threadbare theologies"! Now we submit that people should be wiser than even to countenance such sweeping assertions. Still, what do our good friends mean by "trying Christianity"? How must it be done? A strong article by an eminent man carefully analyzed brings it down to these two points: 1. Let everybody make up his mind to have the spirit of Christ; 2. Let everybody now proceed to practice Christianity. This is exceedingly simple! It is

merest platitude! However, it may not be forgotten that Christianity *has* always been tried more or less. Faithful witnesses for the Master have ever been in evidence. Preaching has, of course, been imperfect enough, but by no means to such an extent as to render the world without excuse. Man has always sought out many inventions. The greatest danger to Christianity has not come from the camp of its declared enemies, but from the midst of its professed adherents. The enemy has often come into the circle of the saints and asked the question: "Has God said?" So to-day no greater harm could come to the Lord's cause than by the method of the Modernist, who has discarded part of the Divine revelation and has cast doubt upon the rest. And these are the men who now come and say, in view of the distress which they see all around them: "Why not try Christianity?" And how do they want to try it? By a method which is foreign to the genius of Christianity. They hardly recognize the Master in his Divine authority and quality; they do not accept his sacrificial death as the only way to life; they take small account of the heinousness of sin; they have an altogether too high opinion of their own ability unto spiritual good and of acquiring a righteousness before God on their own account. They teach contrary to these things, and therefore their ministry is not a ministry of the Word: it is practically "another religion", and they should therefore not speak of trying a Christianity which they have virtually *rejected*.

The right answer to the anxious inquiry as to what should be done to be saved out of our present difficulties is to attend to the proper discharge of the Ministry of the Word. This cannot possibly be done unless our ministers make a thorough estimate of the Reformed principle of authority. This will have to be well understood, heartily

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accepted and lived up to unflinchingly. It will once more give them the Word with its fulness of truth and grace and power. It furnishes the full range of the facts of revelation, the great doctrines whose perception by the mind (for man is a *reasonable* being) is used by the Holy Spirit in dealing with the soul. The minister of the Word must hold forth the facts of Christianity as it has so many bearings upon the spiritual life. Therefore it is the duty of the minister of the Word to bend all his energies in searching out this immense treasure of Divine wisdom, comparing Scripture with Scripture and making it the basis of his exhortation and instruction in righteousness. This to be sure gives us a system of doctrine; but God is a God of order, and we should be most ready to accept it.

And now to our mind there is nothing that has approached the general agreement and clearness of all these various Confessions of Faith, which, strange almost to say, has been the characteristic of the distinctively Reformed family of churches. And although these Confessions were not professedly received by other denominations, nevertheless in a very real sense, the deep range of truths contained in them have characterized the sound preaching of Baptists and Methodists and many others, when they were mighty men of God used for the conversion of souls. They could not help in so doing, and thus they were true Ministers of the Word. For they spoke of the full range of the attributes of God; of the fall of man and his natural corruption; of the necessity of regeneration; of the substitutionary atonement; of justification by faith; etc. These all proceeded from the Reformed principle of authority, which gave them the Scriptures, and being loyal to it, they were more or less united on the basic elements of Christianity. But

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this cannot be expected of the Liberal. His principle of authority leads him anywhere, and listening to the deceptive impulses of the natural heart and the reasonings of the natural mind is apt to lead him away from the very things which characterize Christianity. *The Christian Century* has therefore done the Christian public a great service in confessing honestly that Liberalism is very nearly "another religion". And they who are of that mind we can no longer acknowledge as Ministers of the Word but the Ministers of Private Views largely contradictory to the realities of spiritual things.

To conclude. It would seem that hardly anything would be more in order than once more seriously to consider the nature and the scope of the Reformed principle of authority. On it depends our possession of the Divine revelation. It gave power to the preaching of the Apostles. It shook all Europe in days of the Reformation. It has been the cause and the accompaniment of all revivals of religion. This should be availed of in this terrible time of world-wide national and ecclesiastical distress and disorder.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PROGRAM OF REFORMED CHURCHES

The Reformed principle of authority calls for its own program under which it operates according to its own principle. This hinges on the nature of Scripture and its use.

Professedly these Scriptures have generally been regarded as the Divine revelation, but interpreted in divergent ways. Since the days of the Apostles the Church has followed a course which has resulted in degeneration whence a reformation became necessary. In the sixteenth century the foundations of Christianity were thoroughly examined, and a much better basis than ever before was provided for the soundness of the Church. And we believe that while Luther was the great man of God of heroic mould to blaze the rough pathway John Calvin was preëminent in correctly formulating the great principles which underlie the true Christian religion. He furnishes what is known as the Reformed type of doctrine and practice. The specific Reformed Churches are heirs to a glorious heritage whose great principles still hold true and await further development; some restatement, perhaps; and certainly, fuller application. In these later days we have not come up to our high calling. There obtains neither the grasp of the situation nor the disposition of bestirring ourselves, but the general opinion as well of the ministry as of the laity has been caught by the glitter of a practical pietism of a modern cast as sufficient for the demands of

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religion; and as a result, we have been drifting away from safe moorings.

It is therefore more than time that all seriously examine themselves as to their position. The din of jangling voices is deafening. The current that carries the weak away from their safety is strong. It will not do to be content with glittering generalities, which are partially unsound, and which are so apt to endanger the remaining sound parts. We must be firm and brave enough to refuse in joining in the general chorus in praise of the kind of religion now in vogue, and we must take strong position on the platform which made our fathers great and strong.

At the risk of some repetition, but serving somewhat as a resumé of what has been said above, we shall conclude our book in indicating the sphere of action of Reformed Churches as required by their principle, the present departure from it, and what must be done to get back.

Reformed Churches rest upon Scripture in a specific way as the only source and rule of faith and life. In expressing themselves definitely and systematically for the Church as a whole, it has felt the need of a Confession of Faith or Creed. These furnish the official and well-considered sum-total of the best minds and hearts on the marrow of Scripture. Thus we recognize the authority of the Church, but always in such a manner that it remains strictly subservient to Scripture, and its beliefs are always open to new testing and comparison with Scripture. At the same time the Reformed recognize the mystical element in the work of the Holy Spirit, but always as testifying in strict accordance with the contents of the Word. They also recognize correctness in life; but to be acceptable to God it must proceed from faith,

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which in turn needs to be based upon the truth as it is in Jesus. True religion is this, to know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, and to serve Him according to the revelation He has given. While the motive-power of spiritual life proceeds from the heart regenerated by the Holy Spirit, its *availability and direction* is determined by the Word given by that same Holy Spirit *who limits Himself to it*, making use of the contents of Scripture, doctrinal as well as ethical. Hence, the truth as a whole must be the continual source of the soul's contemplation, for thus his feelings will be most effectually and permanently warmed, and his sanctified will will lead to well-considered action.

To gain the fulness of the truth is not the simple matter of picking it up from the surface of Scripture. It is like the ore in a mine whose gold is yielded after much labor and refining. Hence, profound study and a comprehensive grasp to reach the full compass is necessary: in this way alone the many intimate relations are coördinated into one great harmony. Thus the marvelous organism of the Divine wisdom looms up to our view.

There must be progress also. Already in the days of the Apostles believers were slackening up in their search, and were going backwards (Heb. 6:1-3). And in connection with this very fault comes the ominous warning of retrogression in grace (vv. 4 and on). It was necessary for them once more to resume their course and "go on to perfection". This very same situation obtains to-day.

John Calvin gave to his great theological work the significant title: "Institutes of the Christian Religion". This was not due to arrogance, but to conviction of the truth. Founding all on Scripture and recognizing a

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historical continuity of the work of the Holy Spirit in the visible church, he was true to the idea of the one "Holy Universal Church". All the Reformed Churches thought thus, whence in principle they were averse to sectarianism. However, they recognized the Church as always in need of reformation, even as they felt this to be the ceaseless need of every individual Christian. Calvin and the other Reformers lived in a time when reformation was notoriously necessary, and even many Catholics in these days were calling loudly for "reformation in head and members". However, the actual accomplishment of this was opposed within the bosom of the Church, but our fathers persisted in giving their testimony, and came to action. That as a consequence they were cast out of the Church was not at their direct initiative, but this *became a situation which was forced upon them; whence the Roman Church was really the schismatic*. Furthermore, the Reformed so loved the Church as the one body of Christ, that they were averse to naming it after a person, but simply indicated its general quality, or the circumstances in which it appeared, whence no name for a church is so expressive and pertinent, so much devoid of giving offence, and so accordant with the IXth Article of the Apostles' Creed as the designation "Reformed".

Although our fathers did not agree with others in important points of doctrine they did not deny them a place in the Kingdom of Grace, and were ever ready to recognize their services in its behalf. Nevertheless they firmly believed in the superiority of their own views. Many are holding that the mere fact of being Christians is of such importance that all zeal for special views is superfluous. To grasp the bearing of this specious objection to the necessity of full-orbed Christian

belief, it must be noted that there is a difference between the *being* of the Church and its *well-being*; and the transfer of the attributes of the one to the other has brought endless confusion in reasoning on the subject. The Holy Universal Church has always existed, even in the Dark Ages, and in times of deepest moral corruption. Though false doctrine and immorality creep in ever so much, God knows His own: in such times there have always been the "seven thousand who have not bowed the knees to Baal". This, then, concerns the *being* of the Church, for whose existence and integrity we need not fear; for all this lies in the Divine good pleasure and obeys His irresistible will. But this very aspect of the matter touches the sphere of the forbidden things of God, of which we may not take advantage, nor regulate our conduct thereby. The other aspect of the matter touches the *well-being* of the Church. This pertains to the human sphere wherein lie our duties and responsibilities, which call for active exertion with their Divinely appointed fruitage.

This distinction, then, has direct bearing upon our estimation of the many denominations existent. In the light of the *being* of the Church these divisions do not matter, since God knows His own in all these, the Roman Catholic elect included. But it does matter very much in the light of the *well-being* of the Church. The confusion of these two distinctions is the cause of the persistent cry that we must not stress beliefs because true believers are to be found in all ages and everywhere. But this is transferring the attributes of one conception to another—the logical fallacy of "shifting one's base". As we thus take advantage of the forbidden aspect of the Church, we are banking on the integrity of the *being* of the Church in such a way as to allow neglect of the things

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which must make for its *well-being*. Man has his own work and responsibility also in the care for the Church. Here obtains as wide a sphere as anywhere else to proceed on correct principles, to be loyal to truth and righteousness, to seek after improvement, and jealously to maintain what we have. This is imperative for the simple reason that there have always been tendencies towards declension from the truth and from holy living. In His inscrutable wisdom God has permitted this to prevail in His Church for reasons of His own and to operate according to the law of reaping what one has sown. It is a part of the range of struggling to which fallen man is called. Even Divine truth can escape man, and he must watch and work for it.

Here, then, lies the responsibility of seeking after, developing and maintaining the truth which is the body in which the soul of religion lives and moves and has its being. Religion is the expression of the sense of relationship to Deity and the attempt to answer its demands. This definition locates the roots of religion in the heart (the basis of our personality), nevertheless that which comes forth from our inmost self must be defined and clarified. This is done by the faculty of knowing. The human spirit is a whole with faculties which do not work separately but in the most intimate and complex manner. Hence, what is vaguely felt and perceived, needs to be *known* and so *made clear*. Thus understood, Divine truth in its full compass becomes the food of the soul. This must be maintained to avoid the errors of a bald mysticism. To that general class belong the people who think that doctrinal knowledge is not necessary for true religion. However, they possess it nevertheless, and whatever part of it is true, that they derived from Scripture: the fact is that the Holy Spirit

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refuses to give revelation of *original content* to any soul; but He leads into the truth by means of the Word. He develops the content of that Word for those who rightly seek, and they have the best chance of walking in the ways of the Lord.

What then is truth? All that the prophets have spoken; all the revelation of the riches of His grace; all the doctrinal facts constituting the ground of saving truth; all issuing in obedience to the Divine will in holy living. The Savior concisely characterized it: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). For this reason the Reformers have always insisted on instruction in the Word, specifically including in this the leading outlines of the structure of the Divine wisdom concerned in our salvation, and they held that we cannot be too particular in striving to obtain as full a conception as possible of the riches of His grace as these are exhibited in the Divine thoughts, which we endeavor to set forth as complete and harmonious as they are in God Himself. But let it be noted, that along with this the fathers have never denied the concomitant office of the mystical element: this was equally real to them and indispensable. In their practice the intellectual and the mystical elements were definitely combined, and hence, both because of their comprehensive knowledge of Scripture and the tender susceptibility of their regenerate heart, our fathers could be used by the Holy Spirit for the clear expression of the Divine wisdom. Furthermore, since they understood the Word so well, they had a basis for the assurance of salvation of so firm a character as to contrast strongly with the notorious lapses to which Mystics have been liable.

The Christian Church, of course, ever endures; but

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it has been subject to many vicissitudes. As we regard the Divine aspect of things solely, we are unable to fathom God's providence in allowing serious declension in the Church, neither do we understand the reason and the manner of His interference with His special grace to turn the erring Church into better paths.

But since we are placed within a sphere of human relationships, with its laws of life and action, with its responsibilities and rewards, we must be governed by them and expect failure or success according to the measure of obedience to divinely ordained means.. Hence, while the efficient causes lie in God, so much of which is hidden from us, nevertheless we are to proceed on principles which God has laid down for us as the rule of our actions. A most fundamental one is *that the Church is ever to see to it that the foundations of truth lie secure*; and she must believe *that the operation of grace there finds its most congenial sphere of activity*. "The clearer and fuller the mysteries of grace are apprehended and understood, so much the better instrument will the Holy Spirit find at hand for sounding forth the divine melody" (Kuyper). And error, though for a time ever so attractive and plausible, will never completely prove to have afforded the mind a satisfactory congruence of all things. The problems of being will persistently call for their own solution however much man may be continuing to suppress the facts. The pieces of life's enigma will fit together into a consistent whole when they are laid in the only one possible right way. Furthermore, a neglect of zeal for the truth in favor of enjoying the luxury of mere sensuous piety will not endure to safeguard the welfare of the Church. Truth is irrepressible: it demands to be known; and it is the guide in the only right path. Whence, if the Reformed conception is the

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right one, we will find it come up again and again for notice, even if the whole world should have gone on awhile building on other principles. The history of philosophy is witness to this. As it seeks to delve into the origin and being of things, it has run a course, according to George Henry Lewes, which leaves us at the present time in precisely the same point at which we were in the fifth century, thus completing a circle. Thus error in any form will fail. After lapses in the Church, it must always come back again to a new vision of the only truth. Something in the constitution of things cries out for its vindication. Kuyper has thus portrayed the inevitable process which faces the Church as she stands before the range of God's revelation, and as she essays to study and assimilate it. "God's special revelation having been completed, its content needed to be taken up in the illuminated consciousness of regenerate humanity and reproduced therefrom. That this task was laid upon regenerate humanity it did at first not in the least understand. If it had been left to its own discretion, it would have withdrawn itself in mystic enjoyment of its treasure of salvation, fully contented, after the same impulse which so much later obtained in Methodistic circles, especially in the company of the Réveil, and which looks down upon theological labor with a sort of spiritual self-conceit. But the Holy Spirit has driven the Church to this labor through the reaction which arose from the consciousness of unregenerate humanity, which had for its object the dissection and destruction of the contents of Revelation, yea, of Revelation itself. And not until on that account real peril had forced this scientific labor to be performed, was a taste for it acquired, according to the maxim: "by learning we learn to learn"; and thus the desire was fostered whence the

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eventual flourishing of theological study can be explained" (Encyc. II. 587, 588).

The prevalent departure from the basis of Reformed belief which entails painstaking theological study is excused with praising Bible study and adhesion to "evangelical truth".

But there is confusion of concept in this. For, however much one may seek to avoid appearances, it is after all utterly impossible to avoid arriving at doctrines as a result of any kind of Bible study. And hence there is dishonesty in decrying theology when in such Bible study it is actually cultivated after a fashion. And what is worse, is the fact that this latter, which is praised so highly, is indeed a species of theological study but it is carried on in a loose and slipshod manner, according to unsound and conflicting principles with corresponding results. Whatever men may say, the minds of people are filled with various theological views, but regulative safeguards being absent, these concepts are apt to be hazy and erroneous. Besides, it is an evidence of indolence, lack of a serious estimate of things, that people neglect the study of principles as they can do within their range even, and allow themselves to absorb doctrines in a casual way and at a minimum of effort. Lacking these methods, the full-orbed beauty of the truth is neither seen nor utilized.

There is a sickening superficiality about all this. Creeds are rejected as if they are arbitrary compositions violently deduced from Scripture by a few designing men. But they represent the common voice of eminent believers, and signify far more than the individualistic opinions which are offered instead. From this bubbles up a bedlam of ideas, founded on all kinds of ill-considered principles, or, on none at all. Some of these

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are weak and meaningless, and usually "catchy", as all superficial things are apt to be, as when the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse poetizes on "The Creed of Creeds":

"They questioned my theology;
And talked of modern thought;
Bade me recite a dozen creeds—
I could not as I ought.
'I've but one creed', I answer made,
And do not want another;
I know I've passed from death to life
Because I love my brother."

And what do we get at that rate? The great mass of people have no large or satisfactory view of the way of salvation. Ideas of God, of sin, of the ground of hope in Christ, etc., are meager. An un-Scriptural construction of the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God has captivated general opinion with its serious peril to eternal destiny, and thus Christianity has been supplanted by a species of paganism. Joining of the church has largely become a formal ceremony, or at best, it is done on mere sentimental impulse. Irreverence and flippancy, and the "plague of jocularity" are common, even in the sacred desk. Trifling with holy things, and blasphemy in certain directions is the sin of many, of ministers included.

This prevalent ignorance causes many to fall a prey to rank errorists who eloquently advocate their doctrines, and these find ready entrance into the existing vacuums. Also, some choice souls with truly spiritual experiences and earnestness of purpose are easily led away from confessional churches, because of the warmth and fervor in some pietistic circles which make an arbitrary measure of experience and sometimes mere loquacity the evidence of true religion. And as for the ministry, it either holds its beliefs of the Standards as a matter of form, or it

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stands on an individualistic platform of its own. Many delight to skate along the thin edge of ecclesiastical safety. Under these influences many seminaries indeed make theological study a matter of scientific method, but they lean strongly in the anti-confessional direction. Hence, a sort of evangelical rationalism forms the groundwork of Modern Theology. And of course this is reflected in the religious press, which together with a weak pulpit goes to form general public opinion in matters of religion.

Is there any Christianity? Yes; there must be, for God always had His own. But what there is, does not advance the *well-being* of the Church. Passing some forms which are professedly advanced in type, even the true are infected with the evils. A generally unsound basis underlies the American type of religion which can be characterized as one that rests on the practical with a pietistic base. It is one in which knowledge is at a minimum, Christian experience being the prime requisite. This pietistic cast is derived from the influence of Methodism which is in evidence in all evangelistic campaigns. But as was the case with the Pietism of Germany, so the old time fervor, excellent in its way, is wearing off. Formalism begins to assert itself and Christian practices, no longer urged by spiritual sensitiveness, is bound to lapse as well, of which there are evidences enough.

It is interesting to note that our American type of Christianity is similar to a movement which obtained in The Netherlands in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and which goes by the name of The Réveil. This was a "powerful spiritual movement, but from the start manifested an anti-confessional basis. It rested on a general Christian foundation and was characterized by

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its individualistic, aristocratic, methodistic and philanthropical cast" (Bavinck, Dogm. I. 131). As a movement it was not organized, and its good influences were soon absorbed in the National Church, making possible the new assertion of orthodoxy which brought out the Christian Reformed Church in The Netherlands as well as profoundly influencing the State Church.

An outstanding result of the religiousness of the American type is the advocacy of Church Union. In itself this is a desirable thing. As far as this sentiment consists in cultivating sympathetic regard for each other and coöperation on general lines, there can be only praise. But this alone cannot form the basis of the union of Christendom. Organic union between really diverse elements cannot be tolerated if we have regard for the integrity of the truth. It is requiring far too much to sacrifice this on the altar of love. Even God does not discount truth in favor of love. And for us to do this is treason against Reformed principles, and from that point of view, treason against the Word.

And there is declension in church life. While real Christianity has all along been advocated, its present mystico-practical type has had in it the seeds of deterioration. Dr. N. M. Steffens wrote to me Dec. 11, 1900: "People do not see the danger of the coming deluge of modern theology and its dire results. They do not know how deeply we are already sunk." There is much lifeless preaching; much of it consists of "giving talks"; there are dead churches enough, run down attendance, loose regard for the sacredness of church-membership, neglect of the sacraments. These run-down conditions have to be remedied by means of the extra-regular method of the revivalist: this is the introduction of a sort of spiritual intoxication with its inevitable

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reaction. It is a heroic remedy demanded by the anemic condition of the ecclesiastical patient. But the old way of building up the system with the meat of the Word was much better. It has always been the fact that where instruction in the truth has been given, there the modern way of a mechanical revivalism was unnecessary.

In conclusion, an answer to the question, What must be done about it? What are we to understand by religious progressiveness? Let it be noted that the Synod of Dordt did not presume to have spoken the last word on the construction of the contents of Scripture. They too believed in progress but not in the modern sense. To-day progressiveness amounts to a neglect, if not denial, of fundamentals, and hence it is a building up on an entirely new basis. The material and spiritual sciences, as psychology, etc., are today resting on a subjective basis, i.e., on a purely human estimate of things, and this applied to theology is bound to affect it destructively. The Reformed hold that stagnation and deterioration have set in, a century or two after the Reformation for that very reason, and hence it is perfectly natural that the Reformed must return to the point where the proper development of the truth was left off. We must continue to build on the foundation of a strict acceptance of Divine revelation as the only reliable objective basis of spiritual knowledge, together with a recognition of humanity as divided into the regenerate and unregenerate parts, whence the correct estimate of the facts of revelation can only be received at the hands of the former. This conception of things is fatal to Modernist Theology.

We need, then, a fresh conception of the principles on which the Reformed Churches are based; in other words, the rock-ribbed foundations of true religion which an

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objective revelation authoritatively furnishes. Only this form will be found able to hold its own against the attacks of an unbelieving science and philosophy, heavily armed and well-organized as they always have been. We are safe only when we stand on our own proper ground, and when we do not attempt to defend ourselves on their premises. Kuyper has explained this at length in his most admirable *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*. He there takes the only stand Christianity can successfully take, namely, on the basis of revelation as deposited in Holy Scripture, and this deposit reflected in the consciousness of the believing Church. This can be clear and reliable only then, when objective truth is intellectually grasped by the subject of saving faith. The problems of life and existence are not solved by mystic feelings: such solution is not their province; strictly speaking, they tell us nothing in the realm of knowledge. But questions of fact must be answered through the faculties of perceiving and knowing: on this, feeling and consciousness will rest assured and secured. Now Divine revelation is the only source of such knowledge, and this must be pondered and assimilated. This applies not only to theology, but as well to the entire realm of knowledge which is all comprehended in God's universe. Even our psychology must be based on principles derived from Scripture—something which our colleges hardly pretend to do, and may even ridicule. All education should reckon with the beginnings of wisdom which are found in the book Divine and which are bound up with the fear of the Lord.

What are particular means to these ends? In maintaining and developing what is specifically Reformed, one naturally thinks of the theological seminaries. What a tremendous responsibility and opportunity professors

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of theology have, not only for their own Church, but even for the enlightenment of the world! They serve the Queen of Sciences! Her light illumines the entire realm of knowledge! These professors deal with the scientific examination and construction of these very problems which underlie all life and existence. How jealous we may well be that these professors magnify their office! And the Church must scrupulously see to it that she chooses men to that office of sterling qualifications and of unquestioned loyalty to, and enthusiasm for the Standards. It would be nothing short of a calamity to choose them for the sake of expediency, or as a compliment, for a reward, or for any other motive as frivolous.

Next we point to the pulpit, in which the carefully trained ministry comes in contact with the people, who are there instructed in the things which pertain to existence in its deepest purposes and values, for this life and the life to come. They are "ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating" by them. They must bring the authoritative message from the Majesty on High: in the Word are their instructions; these cannot be examined and brought out too well! The Minister of the Word is also its expert teacher. In former times, and to-day in some circles, this aspect of the minister's work is still held in honor, namely, to conduct classes which he instructs in the catechisms of the Church. Wherever this has been done, in Scotland, in The Netherlands, and elsewhere, men and women mighty in the Scriptures, strong in faith and in character have been found, who were pillars in the Church of God.

The religious press is another power for good: it reaches the entire denomination where its voice can leisurely be heard. "De Heraut" in The Netherlands under its very able editor, Dr. A. Kuyper, was in his

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lifetime a most conspicuous example of tremendous formative influence. It almost created a new devotion to the scientific study of Reformed theology with the laity educated by it to appreciate it. If the denominational press anywhere does not speak out loyally to its own cause, deterioration is bound to set in. If we believe at all in our cause we have no reason to be ashamed of its presentation: silence on its part is dereliction of duty, if not, possibly, treachery in one's own camp. In the swirl of so many winds of doctrine blowing in all directions, it is of peculiar importance to have fearless and staunch defenders of the faith.

We have spoken of the program of Reformed Churches in a way which applies more or less to any Protestant Church which stands resolutely upon the Scriptures as over against Modernism. To be sure, all that has been said applies specifically to Reformed and Presbyterian Churches of that name. And as having the latter in mind, it all applies to that view of the doctrines of the Bible which goes under the name of Calvinism. Kuyper was a most ardent defender of this form of Protestant belief. Having his own country in mind, he said this of it: "Calvinism has not only *a* future among the Dutch orthodox: it has *the* future. Everything else crumbles and melts away. Theologically there is much a-wearying of oneself all around us, and there is much bootless toiling before people, because Calvinism is too much for the majority of them. But just because it is such a power, it captures the spirits and will not let them off" (*De Heraut*, No. 1011). Possibly some of my readers may not take kindly to Calvinism, so called; however, the words of Kuyper just quoted apply equally well to the Reformed principle of authority. It is the only one which can permanently satisfy mind and heart. It has a vitality

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which no amount of negation can kill. With the earnest conviction, with the perfect consecration, with the indomitable energy of William of Orange, who realized its value for his own heart and for the salvation of his people, it would be well for all, with the fine enthusiasm which eminently befits loyalty to Divine truth, to show in our lives and exemplify in our deeds, the faithful, forceful motto of this same William of Orange:

"I WILL MAINTAIN!"

A CORRECTION

In the interest of historical accuracy the indulgent reader will please note that the date 1833 on page 7 line 9 should read: 1863.

